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WRITINGS

OF THE LATE

JOHN M. MASON, D.D.

CONSISTING OF

SERMONS, ESSAYS, AND MISCELLANIES,

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CHURCH OF GOD.

No. I.

It is our intention to lay before our readers in a series of numbers, a detailed but succinct account of the Church of God, embracing the chief questions concerning its nature, members, officers, order, worship, and the points directly connected with them. As we shall proceed upon a regular plan, the reader is requested not to form his judgment of the whole from an inspection of a part; and not to disjoin in his reflections those parts, which precede from those which follow; but to recur to the former as he meets with the latter, that the series of thought may be preserved unbroken in his mind; and that he may not accuse us hereafter with being superficial or negligent, when the blame ought possibly to be attached to his own memory. For having proved a point once, we shall not repeat the proof afterwards, unless for very particular reasons, and in a very summary way. We begin with

An inquiry into the meaning of the term CHURCH.

A community which has subsisted for ages, must always possess a number of usages and terms peculiar to itself. And although their origin may be remote, and their force unknown to many of its members, they suggest general ideas which serve the purposes of common conversation and common life. The fact may appear extraordinary, but it is nevertheless true; for the proportion of men in any society who analyze the words and phrases which they have been accustomed to utter ever since they were able to speak, is comparatively small. The reader can bring this matter to an easy test by interrogating himself concerning expressions which are coeval with his earliest recollection; and he will probably be surprised to find that, in thousands of instances, they have passed and repassed through his mind without his attempting to arrest them long enough to satisfy himself as to their appropriate sense. This want of precision is accompanied with no bad effect, till something occur to touch an institution, a privilege, or an observance, when the inconvenience may be sensibly felt. A popular notion is often overturned by the interpretation of a word; and the multitude are astonished either at their own mistake, or at the effrontery of those who charge them with committing it.

That which happens to all other durable com-

binations of men, must happen to the Christian Society. We need go no further for an example than its very name. "Church," "Christian Church," "Church of God," are familiar to the mouths of millions. They talk of "the Church" upon all occasions, without suspecting that perhaps they understand not what they say. They possibly never asked *what is the Church?* Possibly, they may think it too plain to deserve an answer. Possibly, also, the more they revolve it, the more they may be puzzled. Try the experiment. Put the question successively to several decent, intelligent men, and their replies, various as their previous religious habits, will convince you that their acquaintance with the subject is slight indeed. It is therefore necessary to go to first principles.

The word "Church," derived from the Greek κυριακὸν, signifies "the house of the Lord;" and marks the *property* which he has in it. But the original words which it is employed to translate, signify a different thing. The Hebrew words קהל (*cahal*) and עדה (*gheda*) in the Old Testament; and the corresponding one ἐκκλησια (*ecclesia*) in the New, all signify *an assembly*, especially one convened by invitation or appointment. That this is their generic sense, no scholar will deny; nor that their particular applications are ultimately resolvable into it. Hence it is evident, that from the terms themselves nothing can be concluded

as to the nature or extent of the assembly which they denote. Whenever either of the two former occurs in the Old Testament, or the other in the New, you are sure of an *assembly*, but of nothing *more*. What that assembly is, and whom it comprehends, you must learn from the *connexion* of the term, and the *subject* of the writer. A few instances will exemplify the remark.

In the Old Testament קָהָל, (*cahal*) is applied

To the *whole mass* of the people, . *Ex.* xii. 6.

To a *portion* of the people, who came upon Hezekiah's invitation to keep the passover.

2 *Chron.* xxx. 24.

To the *army* of Pharaoh. . . *Ezek.* xvii. 17.

To an *indefinite multitude.* . . *Gen.* xxviii. 3.

To the society of Simeon and Levi. xlix. 6.

So also עֵדָה, (*gheda*) is applied

To the *whole* nation of Israel. *Ex.* xvi. 22; xxxv. 1.

To the *particular* company of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. . . . . *Numb.* xvi. 16.

To the assembly of the *just*, as opposed to the *wicked*. . . . . *Psal.* i. 5.

To the *judicatory*, before which crimes were tried. . . . . *Numb.* xxxv. 12. 24; compared with *Deut.* xix. 12. 17. 18.

In like manner ἐκκλησία, (*ecclesia*) rendered "Church," is applied

To the *whole body* of the redeemed.

Ephes. v. 24. 27.

To the *whole body* of professing Christians.

1 *Cor.* xii. 28.

To *local* organizations of professing Christians, whether more or less extensive; as in the apostolic salutations, and inscriptions of the epistles.

To a *small association* of Christians meeting together in a private house. *Col.* iv. 15.—*Phil.* i. 2.

To a civil assembly *lawfully* convened.

Act. xix. 39.

To a body of people *irregularly* convened.

Act. xix. 32.

This specimen is sufficient to show that no person can answer the question, "what is the *Church?*" without carefully examining the *thing* as well as the *name:* nor safely expound either, without consulting the original scriptures; or putting himself implicitly under the direction of one who is able to do it for him. An attempt to discuss the constitution and order of the church, without looking much further and much deeper than the mere *term*, as it occurs in our English Bibles, can never be any better than childish prattle.

I have said that the term "Church" is applied to the whole body of professing Christians; and my design is to prove that the scriptures teach the doctrine of *a Visible Church Catholic*, composed of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion.

This great society is a "Church," because it is

collected together by the authority of God in the dispensation of the gospel, and solemnly set apart from the world for sacred uses.

This church is "visible," as distinguished from the "elect of God," who are known to him alone; and therefore cannot, *as such*, form a separate society among men.

This visible church is "Catholic," that is, it comprehends all those "throughout the world that profess the true religion."

If then I am asked what I mean by the "Church?" I answer, that visible catholic society which I have now defined; which is the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ upon earth, where he has deposited his truth, and instituted his ordinances.

The fact that he has founded such a church, I thus demonstrate.

1. It is indisputable that such a church did formerly exist, and that by his own appointment.

The whole of the covenanted seed of Abraham belonged to it. That this "seed" made up the church of God under the law; that it embraced, at least in some periods, thousands and ten thousands within and without the land of Judea, and among them multitudes who never were partakers of saving grace, cannot be doubted. Every one who had the token of God's covenant in his flesh, whether regenerated or not, was reputed a member of this church. The Jews were scattered, by

several dispersions, through distant lands; yet preserving the name of the God of their fathers, and their profession of adherence to him, they were never considered as cast out of his church. On this ground it was, that on the day of pentecost, "there were dwelling at Jerusalem, Jews, devout men, out of *every nation under heaven.*"* The old economy was subjected to local restrictions which rendered a universal dispensation impossible while they lasted, but still the "professors of the true religion," the worshippers of the God of Israel, made up but *one* church. Reside where they might, they all belonged to the יהוה קהל, the congregation of the Lord.

If, then, there is no longer any public church visible, what has become of it? Who has annulled, destroyed, blotted it out? Produce a single declaration of its divine author that it should come to an end. The disinheriting of the unhappy Jews is nothing to the purpose, or rather supports the contrary. Their being cast out of the visible church, for they could not be cast out of any other, implies the existence of that church, and the privilege of connexion with her. The abolition of those restrictions which were suited to a preparatory state, fitted her for universality. But that which fitted her for universality could in no sense whatever be her annihilation. The Jews

* Act. ii. 5.

were not cut off, till after the commencement and establishment of the new dispensation, that is, till after the Gentiles were taken in: therefore the visible church, as an organized whole, subsisted after the commencement of this dispensation, and that among the Gentile Christians. And the excision of the Jews was no more an extermination of the visible church, than the lopping off a diseased branch is felling the whole tree. It is incumbent on them who deny a visible catholic church under the New Testament, to show at what time, by what authority, and by what means, so signal a constitution of God has been laid aside.

2. The Old Testament scriptures proceed on the principle that the visible church state, co-extensive with the Redeemer's kingdom upon earth, was *not* to cease at the introduction of the evangelical dispensation.

There are numerous predictions concerning the church, and numerous promises to her, in her *public* capacity, which are unfulfilled at this hour, and never can be fulfilled, if her visible unity be not asserted. For example: "Esaias saith, there shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles: in him shall the Gentiles trust." Does any man suppose that the "reign" of the Redeemer "over the Gentiles" is confined to those whom his grace has subdued to the "obedience of faith?" And if not, that his king-

dom, destitute of a distinctive mark, is broken down into detached fragments, resembling not a compact community, but a hord of petty democracies? The very idea of a kingdom proves that his church is one, that she is visible, and that this visible unity is one of her essential attributes. If you cut her up into ten thousand pieces, there is no more a kingdom. If you strip her of visible form, you contract her within limits of which Omniscience alone is the judge; you withdraw her from the eyes of men altogether; and shut her up in impenetrable secrecy. Where then is her light? Where her testimony? Where the use of those cautions, precepts, encouragements, which are adapted to her state as *visible*, and have no meaning in any other application?

Thus, "I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream."*—"Kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens thy nursing-mothers."† "The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising—the abundance of the sea shall be converted into thee; the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee."‡—These are but a very small sample of prophecies which run in the same general strain: and two things are obvious on the bare inspection of them.

First, that they contemplate the church as *one;*

* Is. lxvi. 12. † Is. xlix. 23. ‡ Is. lx. 3. 5.

for she is introduced as a single person; and under this idea are they addressed to her.

Second—That this unity is not ascribed to her as composed of the elect alone. The Gentiles who should flow into her were not all, nor are pretended to have been, real Christians: that "light" which was to shine upon the Gentiles, and the "brightness" of that "rising" which was to attract the "kings," must of necessity be *external:* nor could kings be her "nursing-fathers," nor their queens her "nursing-mothers," but as a public society which they could *distinguish.* In any other sense the prediction is palpably false.

Further: when he foretells the transition of the dispensation of grace from the Jews to the Gentiles, the prophet uses the same style. He represents the church not as subsisting in a vast multitude of independent associations, but as a great *whole;* as possessing individual unity. He personifies it, as in the former instances: "Sing, O barren, that thou didst not bear: break forth into singing, and cry aloud, that thou didst not travail with child; for more are the children of the desolate, than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations; spare not; lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes."*

* Is. xliv. 1. 2.

This is, unequivocally, a description of the church as exhibited under an outward dispensation. The comparison between the "desolate" and the "married wife," can have no place in a question concerning the *internal* church, nor do the other circumstances at all agree to her.

Indeed, whoever admits that there was, at any time past, *one* visible church, and that promises were made to her, of which some have had, others are receiving, and others are yet to have, their accomplishment, must of course admit the continuance of that church at present. For the *fulfilling* a promise *to* an individual or a society, supposes the existence of that individual or society. The promises, for example, to Israel, could never have been performed, had Israel perished. The adoption of another family might have been accompanied with other promises, or with the renewal of the old ones: but, in no sense could they be *fulfilled* to a race which was extinct before the time of fulfilment came. The fact, then, that God is *now* fulfilling, and to fulfil *hereafter*, promises given to the visible church ages ago, establishes her perpetuity and identity. She never has been destroyed, or she could not at *this day* enjoy the accomplishment of *ancient* promise

3. The language of the New Testament implies, that an external visible church state *was* not abolished with the law of Moses.

The writers of the New Testament never go about to *prove* that there is a catholic visible church; far less do they speak of it as *originating* in the evangelical dispensation; but they assume its existence, as a point which no Christian in their days ever thought of disputing. They argue against schism, upon the principle that the visible church is one, and they record ecclesiastical deliberations, and decisions by the apostles and elders, which, upon any other principle, were downright usurpation of dominion over conscience. This last particular, will be more fully handled before we have done. Let us, in the mean time, attend to some instances in which this doctrine of the one visible church, is interwoven with the texture of their language.

"This is he that was with the *church* in the wilderness." Acts vii. 38. Stephen refers to Moses, and we know what church Moses was with. No one, in his right mind, will undertake to say that Moses was with the elect only. "Our fathers," adds the martyr, "would not obey him." Moses himself writes that these rebels were the "people"—the "whole congregation"—"all the children of Israel,"* and this was the "church" to which Stephen refers.

"The Lord added to the *church* daily such as should be saved." Acts ii. 47. "Saul made

* Ex. xxxii. Num. xiv.

havoc of the *church.*" Ch. viii. 3.—"God hath set some in the *church;* first, apostles," &c. 1 Cor. xii. 28.—"Gaius, the host of the whole *church.*" Rom. xvi. 23.—"Give none offence to the *church of God.*" 1 Cor. x. 32.—"I persecuted the *church of God.*" 1 Cor. xv. 9.

The list might easily be swelled; but it is needless. Let us weigh the import of these passages. The "church," to which the Lord daily added such as should be saved, was not the body of the elect, for no addition can be made to them; nor was it a single congregation, unless God had no more people to be saved in Jerusalem, than, together with mere professors, were sufficient for one pastoral charge. Nor is it to be imagined either that Saul confined his persecution to one congregation; or that he was able to pick out the elect, and persecute them. As little can it be suspected, either that Gaius never entertained any but the elect, or that his entertainments never went beyond one congregation. Nor will a sober man allege, that God hath set no officers but in one congregation, or that they have no functions toward any but his elect; or that all whom he hath set are themselves of the number; nor yet, that "offence" can never be given to any but to the elect. The sin, to be committed at all, requires both that the offending and offended, may see and know each other. But the scripture is

express: The Lord added to the *church*—Saul persecuted the *church*—Gaius was the host of the *church*—God hath set officers in the *church*—Christians are not to offend the *church*. Now as these and many similar phrases, are utterly inapplicable either to a single congregation, or to the body of the redeemed, they must designate another and different society, which can be no other than what we have called the visible Church Catholic. Too extensive for partial assemblies, too notorious for any secret election of men, and yet a church; *the* church—it is *general*, *external*, and but ONE.

In truth, the phraseology of the New Testament on this subject, as on many others, is borrowed directly from that of the Old. The expression "church of God," is a literal translation into English of those Greek words which are themselves a literal translation from the Hebrew. For every scholar knows, that קהל יהוה or האלהים; ἐκκλησία θεοῦ; and "Church of God," signify in their respective tongues, exactly the same thing. Conceive, then, of an apostle's addressing himself to Jews, as Paul did, in the Hebrew tongue. By what phrase would he designate the church? Evidently by that which is used in the Hebrew scriptures, and was familiar to his hearers. And what sense could they put upon it? Evidently that which had long been settled, and no other. Would

the Jews, then, have understood him as meaning by "the church," either a section of their nation no bigger than could be contained within the walls of a synagogue? or those favoured ones whom God has predestined to life? The thing is impossible! because he would use the current phraseology of both their holy and their popular language in a sense quite different from any which had formerly been affixed to it. They would understand him as discoursing of that great visible society which God had publicly set apart for himself.

Conceive again of the apostle as addressing Gentiles on this subject, and speaking Greek. He would evidently express himself in the terms which he *has* used in his epistles. What ἐκκλησία (*ecclesia*) means, every Grecian could tell. But how was a Heathen to understand the meaning of ἐκκλησία θεοῦ (*ecclesia theou*,) or the "church of God?" He was perfectly ignorant of Christian doctrine, and the structure of Christian congregations. Nor could he form any correct notion of the thing intended, without an explanation drawn from the Old Testament scriptures.

The result stands thus: The apostle, when preaching or writing to Jews or Gentiles, speaks of the church of God in terms well known to the one, and entirely new to the other. The alternative is obvious. Either he used these terms in

their ascertained sense, or not. If the former, he has recognized the visible unity of the Church Catholic; and so our position is proved. If the latter, he deceived all his hearers; all his correspondents; all who in every age adopt his letters as a rule of faith. Undoubtedly, had he used the terms "church" and "church of God" in a sense unknown to Moses and the Fathers, he would not have omitted to mention it; that we might not be led into errour. But the fact is, that there is not throughout the New Testament any exposition of these terms. They are employed as terms of the most definite import; as terms which no one who chose to consult the earlier scriptures could mistake. The law of interpretation to the primitive Christians must, of course, be our law; and the same issue returns upon us; the expression "church of God," used without qualification, means an external society comprehending all those who profess the true religion.

If any one think that too much stress is laid upon the coincidence between the phraseology of the two Testaments, let him reflect, not only that they relate to a common whole; but that the same coincidence happens in other things. Thus, "Christ," is but the English form of Χριστος, which is the literal translation of משיח, (Messiah) all signifying "the anointed." When, therefore, the Lord Jesus was proclaimed as the "Christ of

God," how could either Jew or Gentile understand the preacher but by going back to the Old Testament? There the word was perfectly familiar, although, in its sacred sense, utterly unknown to the Heathen. And this explains why a profession that "Jesus is the Christ," was deemed, in the first age of the church, a sufficient criterion of one's religion. No man could make it without being instructed, from the scriptures of the Old Testament, in the Redeemer's character and work. The reason why many now suppose such a profession extremely easy, is, that they do not perceive its relation to truths previously revealed. And this, too, is the reason why there is so much blundering about the nature of the church. People imagine themselves at liberty to interpret the word at their pleasure: whereas it is referrible to the Old Testament as really as the word "Christ." Neither the nature of the church, nor the office of her head, is to be understood without an appeal to the same scriptures. Consequently, that very rule which expounds "the Christ of God," as signifying one who was qualified by the father's appointment, and by the measureless communication of the divine Spirit, to be a Saviour for men; will oblige us to expound the "church of God," as signifying that great visible society which professes his name.

4. The account which the New Testament

gives of the church, confirms the doctrine of her visible unity.

One of the most common appellations by which she is there distinguished, is, "the kingdom of heaven." This can be but one: or else it would not be *a* kingdom, and *the* kingdom, but several. And this one must be visible, because its ordinances are administered by visible agency.* Nay it is only *as visible* that it admits of the exercise of any part of its government by men. The church invisible, which eludes every human sense and faculty, cannot be the object of human functions. And to preclude mistake in this matter, our Lord informs us that his kingdom, while in the world, shall, like other kingdoms, have false as well as true subjects. That hypocrites shall so intermingle with saints as to render their separation in the present life impossible by any means which will not exterminate both. Such is the manifest import of the parable of the "tares." Mat. xiii. 24—30.

An attempt has, indeed, been made, to repel this argument, by supposing the parable to represent, not the mixture of Christians with hypocrites in *the church*, but their mixture with wicked men in *civil Society*. Let us see:

The parable is a likeness of "the kingdom of heaven." A phrase which never signifies the

* Mat. xvi. 19. xxviii. 19, 20. John xx. 21—23.

world at large, or civil society; but the church of God under the evangelical dispensation. There was no need to teach the disciples, by a symbolical lesson, that good men and bad are mingled together in civil society. This had been sufficiently attested by the experience of all previous ages, and was at that very moment evident to their eyes. But considering the expectations which they might be led to form from the introduction of a spiritual economy, it was altogether needful to apprise them that in her best estate, in her noblest appearance as the kingdom of Heaven, the church would be still imperfect, and injured by unworthy members. Nor could the officers of Christ, answering to the "servants of the householder," ever entertain so wild an idea as that of severing Christians from the society of other men; for were it even practicable, it would defeat one of the high ends for which they live in the world; that of "letting their light shine before others;" and would gradually extirpate them from the face of the earth. But it would be very natural for the disciples to imagine that, with the keys of the kingdom of Heaven in their hands, they should endeavour to exclude every one whom they had reason to suspect of insincerity. Many are infected with such a notion to this day. No rotten hearted professor shall pollute their communion! they will rest the right of admission

upon the *reality* of conversion! And some waste their lives in pursuit of that chimera, a perfect church! Nor have either the admonitions of Christ, nor the rough tuition of disappointment, cured them of their folly. There was, therefore, much cause for guarding his disciples against so imposing an errour. And he has taught them that there are no human means of effecting a complete expulsion of the unconverted from his church: that the attempt would destroy his own people: and, therefore, that they must be left, like the tares and the wheat, to "grow together until the harvest." Then, that is, at "the end of the world," he will "send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of"—what? Civil society? No, but out of "*his kingdom*, all things that offend; and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."—v. 41, 42.

To the same amount is the parable of the net, in verses 47—50. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind." Is this, too, a description of civil society? It is evident, that "the sea," with its swarms of fishes, represents the world with its multitudes of men. Like a net cast into the former, the kingdom of heaven introduced among the latter, gathers a mixed assemblage from the common mass. And as it is impossible,

while the net is in the waters, to divide the good fish from the bad; so it is impossible, while the kingdom of heaven exists here among men, to divide saints from hypocrites. The alternative is alike in the type, and the thing typified. The net must be drawn "to shore," before the fish can be distributed; the kingdom of heaven must close; "the end of the world" must come, before "the wicked can be severed from among the just." Nothing can be clearer, than that mankind at large correspond, in the parable, with the fish of the sea; consequently, that the kingdom of heaven, which, like a net thrown into the sea, gathers a *selection* from among men, cannot possibly mean civil society. To make this out, it should be proved that the net catches *all* the fish wherever it is cast into the sea.

To crown this argument; the kingdom of heaven is likened unto "ten virgins, of whom five were wise, and five were foolish."* This also must mean "civil society," or the hypothesis we are considering is ruined. But what man in his senses will venture upon so extravagant an assertion? *All* these virgins professed to belong to the train of the bridegroom—*All* the members of civil society make no such profession. It is wasting words to press the point further. This notion of the state of civil society being represented by the

* Mat. xxv. 1.

parable of the tares, &c. is a fable invented in order to get rid of a troublesome truth: and adds another to the numberless examples already given by zeal without knowledge, of its being much easier to contradict the scriptures, than to explain them. The sum is,

That the kingdom of heaven cannot designate the election of grace; because no one belonging to that will be "cast into the furnace of fire."—We have proved that it cannot signify the state of civil society, and it would be superlatively ridiculous to confine it to a single congregation; therefore,

It must mean the *external Visible Church*, which, according to the conditions of description, can be but ONE.

If we proceed a little further, we shall meet with the same thing under a different form. The apostle Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthian Christians, chap. xii. treats at length, of the various gifts which the Holy Spirit had bestowed upon various individuals. He argues that these gifts ought to be no ground of dissention, for these two reasons: *first*, that they were all of the same divine original; and *secondly*, that they all contributed to the common good, and most effectually by retaining each its appropriate place. The latter reason is illustrated by the analogy of the human body; and winds up with declaring—

"Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." The question is, what are we to understand by the "body of Christ?"

That it signifies a *whole*, is as plain as that words signify any thing. Then, *what* whole? Not the church at Corinth, far less a particular congregation, unless the commission of the apostles and the use of all spiritual gifts, extend no further.

Not the church of the elect; for there are no "schisms" in that body, as *such*. A schism which cannot be perceived is no schism; and the moment you render it perceptible, you are in a visible church. Nor can it be affirmed, but at the expense of all fact and consistency, that God hath set no officers except in the church of his redeemed. For, upon that supposition, no church officer could ever exercise his office toward any non-elected man; the pastoral relation could never be fixed without knowing beforehand who are the elected of God; or else, no person, however blasphemous and abominable, could be kept out of a church, because such "blasphemer and injurious" may possibly be "a chosen vessel." These are absurdities.

But a body, a church there is, in which "God hath set, first, apostles; secondarily, prophets; thirdly, teachers," &c. An individual congregation it is not. A partial coalescence of congre-

gations it is not. The "church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven," it is not: and yet it is a church; *the* church to which God hath given his ordinances. There is no escape; it can be no other than what we have called the *Visible Church Catholic.*

The reader has been more inattentive than it would be fair to suspect of any who shall peruse these sheets, if he has not remarked, that all the *means of salvation* are external. The scriptures, the sabbath, the solemn assembly, the sacraments, the ministry; in a word, the whole system of instituted worship, is visible. Now, is it not a most incredible thing, that the church and the ordinances committed to her, should be of opposite natures? Or rather, that the ordinances should have a solid, external existence, and the church to which they are given, no such existence at all! A visible bible, visible ministry, visible worship, visible sacraments, visible discipline, and no visible church! Nothing but a phantom, a metaphysical idea, as the repository of God's truth and institutions! One fact in the history of revelation, is enough to dispel these visions. It will not be controverted that the scriptures are God's testimony to his church. But more than one half of this testimony was delivered to the Israelites in their public covenanted character; for "unto them were committed the oracles of God." Unto

whom, then, have the subsequent scriptures been committed? "Unto the New Testament Church," you will say. Agreed. But the question falls back upon you, what is the New Testament Church? If she is not the very same great society which God formerly erected for the praise of his glory, and has caused to pass under a new form of dispensation, three consequences follow:

1st, That the Old Testament is no part of the trust deposited with her, and belongs not to the rule of her faith.

2d. That God has divided his testimony between two churches of the most different nature; and of which one has long been extinct. Therefore,

3d. That the whole scriptures, as the testimony of God, never were, nor can be, committed to any church whatever, unless in virtue of another special revelation.

But if, on the contrary, these scriptures are the testimony of God deposited with his church, then it irresistibly follows, that she is now, and ever has been, since her first organization, a public visible society which God has appropriated to himself; where his name is known, and his mercies are vouchsafed.

And, indeed, the general principle of the church visible is so inseparable from the Christian style and doctrine, that its most strenuous opposers are unconsciously admitting it every hour of their

lives. They talk habitually of "the church; the faith of the church; the worship of the church; the sufferings of the church; God's dealings with his church," and a thousand things of like import. Let them ask what they mean by such expressions? They will not say, "a particular congregation;" and if they say "the election of grace," they will speedily contradict themselves, and fact, and the word of God too. Their whole language, as Christians, is accommodated to the very thing, which, in form, they renounce. There is no getting along without it. No ingenuity can enable them to converse five minutes together about the church of God, as existing on earth, without the introduction of an idea different from either of those which they affix to that term: and this third idea, if they will be at the trouble to analyze it, will turn out to be no other than that of the *Visible Church Catholic.*

We have now developed our views of that phrase, "the church," and assigned our reasons for them: the reader will, therefore, recollect, when he meets with it in the course of our disquisitions, that we mean by it the aggregate body of those who profess the true religion: all making up but ONE Society, of which the Bible is the statute book; Jesus Christ the head; and a covenant relation the uniting bond.

CHURCH OF GOD.

No. II.

On its first Organization.

In the preceding number we have proved the existence of a *Visible Church Catholic ;* and that this is the thing intended by such spiritual phrases as "the Church of God," "the house of God," "the kingdom of heaven." But it does not more certainly exist, than it exists in virtue of a divine interposition. None but the living God could set up, protect, and govern, his own kingdom. The question is, when, and where, and how, so singular a society was instituted ? The question is of moment, as being connected with interesting views of the external economy of salvation. Let us attempt to answer it.

We know by experience that the church of God was in the world before us. So did our fathers. So did the previous generation : and in this manner the historical fact may be deduced from the days of the apostles. The "Church,"

therefore, has not been created since their days. Was it created then? No: the apostles found it, as we found it, older than themselves. Their writings are full of its privileges, its ordinances, and other peculiarities; but contain not a single hint of its *originating* with them. They uniformly *suppose* its prior establishment, and speak of it as having been long and familiarly understood. Guided by the clue which they have put into our hands, we go back to the books of the prophets, and meet the same supposition there. We proceed, with similar success, through the Levitical law, and the Sinai-covenant; we pass the age of Moses, and arrive at the *Father of the faithful.* Here the clue runs out. No ingenuity can follow it further. People of God there were; promises of God there were; gracious revelations, and acceptable worship of God, there were: but a *Church of God*, organized upon the principle of *visible unity*, and standing in such relation to him as it did in after ages; such a Church, before the vocation of Abram, there was not, nor any thing which bore the semblance of it. For its original organization; for the germ of that great system into which it has already grown, and shall yet grow, we must look among the transactions of that memorable period which elapsed between the call of Abram in Ur of the Chaldees, and the birth of his son Isaac.

On the first of these occasions Jehovah gave him a double promise:

1. A promise of a numerous progeny, and great personal prosperity. *I will make of thee a great nation; and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee.*—*Gen.* xii. 2, 3.

2. The promise of his being a medium of conveying extensive blessings to the world. *In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*—v. 3.

All the subsequent communications which God made to him are referrible to one of these two promises. They were both called up at different intervals, explained, expanded, and confirmed, till each of them became the basis of an appropriate *covenant.* Let us briefly mark their progress.

1. The promise of a numerous progeny is repeated with an engagement to bestow upon them the land of Canaan, ch. xii. 7. This promise was stated and confirmed in the most precise and ample terms, after Abram had separated from Lot, ch. xiii. 14. 17. And finally, as he was advancing in years, and the probability of its accomplishment was proportionably diminishing, the Lord "came to him in a vision," and having cheered him with this gracious assurance, *I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward,* ch. xv. 1,

renewed the promise concerning his seed, as that which should come forth out of his own bowels and be multiplied as the stars of heaven. The patriarch on this occasion so glorified the divine veracity by his unshaken, unquestioning faith, that the scripture saith, *it was counted to him for righteousness*, verse 6. The renewed promise concerning his progeny was immediately followed by a confirmation of the grant of Canaan; and a remarkable pledge that the grant should be executed in due season. Having, as he had been commanded, slain several animals, divided their bodies, and placed the sections opposite to each other, his senses were locked up to every other object, and Jehovah disclosed to him a comprehensive view of evils to come upon his family before their possession of the promised land. But their possession at the proper time was guaranteed by solemn compact. "A burning lamp," the symbol of the divine presence, "passed between those pieces" of the slain animals, in token of ratifying every stipulation belonging to the promise in question. For *in that same day, the Lord made a* COVENANT *with Abram, saying, "Unto thy seed have I given this land," &c.* v. 8—21.

Here is an end of all transactions for establishing the first promise. It was sealed in the *covenant*, and never again occurs by itself The end of this covenant, too well defined to be mistaken,

was to secure to Abram a numerous posterity, and their inheritance in the land of Canaan. Further it went not. It does not so much as mention the promise relating to the families of the earth being blessed in him. And from the minuteness with which every thing else is adjusted, it is evident that this last promise, not even hinted at, was not intended to be comprised in the covenant which secured the other. Let us proceed then.

2. Fourteen years after the date of this covenant, Jehovah appeared again to Abram, and made another covenant with him. The transaction is thus recorded in the seventeenth chapter of Genesis: *And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the* LORD *appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I* am *the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee; and will multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, As for me, behold my covenant* is *with thee, and thou shalt be a* FATHER OF MANY NATIONS. *Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram; but thy name shall be* Abraham: *for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee; and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations,*

for an everlasting covenant; to be A GOD UNTO THEE, AND TO THY SEED AFTER THEE. *And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee, in their generations. This* is *my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee; Every man-child among you shall be* CIRCUMCISED. *And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man-child in your generations; he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which* IS NOT OF THY SEED. *He that is born in thy house and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man-child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant,* ver. 1—14.

Our inquiry is into the nature and design of this covenant. What was it?

Not a covenant, either of works or grace, for eternal life. For Abram had been "justified by faith, without the works of the law," and had been interested in the covenant of God's grace

before this. His eternal life had been secured many years.

Nor was it merely a personal or domestic covenant: that is, one which provided for the individual dignity of the patriarch, and the prosperous settlement of his children in the land of Canaan. This, too, had been concluded long before, as has been shown. It recognizes, indeed, all that was included in the personal covenant, which it might otherwise be supposed to supersede; but it has features of its own so peculiar and marked, that it cannot be considered in any other light than that of a distinct engagement.

For, besides the solemnity with which it was introduced, and which would hardly have preceded a mere repetition of former grants, it contained new matter; it constituted new relations; and was affirmed in an extraordinary manner.

1st. It contained new *matter—I will make thee a father of many nations:* which is much more than can be interpreted of Abram's literal posterity; and must be viewed as expounding the promise and extending the privilege formerly assured to him—*In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.* It was a great thing to be only an instrument of blessing to all the families of the earth; but a much greater to be that instrument in such a manner as to become what no other man, in the sense of the covenant, ever did, or ever can be-

come, "a *father* of many nations:" and moreover, a personal pledge, also, of his new dignity was conferred upon the patriarch, in that remarkable alteration of his name from Abram to Abraham; the former signifying *high Father;* and the latter, *high Father of a multitude.*

2d. It constituted new relations—*To be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.* This cannot be explained of Abraham's relation to God as the God of his salvation; for in that sense God was his God long before; and whatever is the relation expressed, it grew out of the covenant *now made;* It embraced his *seed* too. Nor, with respect to *their* eternal life, did God now engage to be their God; for all that was adjusted in the covenant of grace; and the privilege could not reach beyond those who were the actual partakers of the same precious faith with Abraham. Whereas, in the sense of *this* covenant, God was the God of all Abraham's seed, without exception, under the limitations which restricted the covenant operation first to Isaac, and afterwards to Jacob, including such as should choose their God, their faith, and their society. For he was to be their God in *their generations:* i. e. as soon as a new individual of this seed was generated, he was within the covenant; and according to the tenour of the covenant, God was his God.*

* The expressions "thy God," "my God," "our God," and that, so much and so properly in use among Christians, "our

The foregoing retrospect has decided one point, to wit, that *the covenant with Abraham and his seed, contemplated them not primarily nor immediately, as of the election of grace, but as an aggregate which it severed from the bulk of mankind; and placed in a social character under peculiar relations to the most high God.* To define precisely the nature of this constitution, we must go a step further, and ascertain who are meant by "the seed."

It cannot be the carnal descendants of Abraham exclusively; although it has a particular respect to them, for,

(1.) Three large branches of that seed were actually shut out of the covenant, i. e. the children of Ishmael, of Esau, and of Keturah.

covenant God," must always be interpreted according to the nature of the covenant to which they refer. Common, but unwarranted practice, has limited them to the covenant of grace; so that a serious man is apt to think he hears heresy, if they be ever applied to any thing else than the saving relation in which a believer stands to God as his reconciled God in Christ Jesus. But this is a mistake; and lies at the foundation of many false and hurtful opinions of the Christian Church and its privileges. The Jews could, *nationally*, call God "their God:" They often did so, and with right, when they were gross hypocrites in the article of their personal religion. The Sinai-covenant constituted them the people of Jehovah, and him their God, as really, but in a widely different sense, as he was the covenant God of Abraham, or of Paul, for personal salvation. A due exposition of this matter involves the whole doctrine of the visible church catholic, which is grievously misunderstood by most professing Christians of all denominations.

(2.) The covenant provided for the admission of others, who never belonged to that seed. *He that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you; every man-child in your generations: he that is born in the house or bought with money of any stranger, which is* NOT OF THY SEED.

This principle was acted upon under the constitution which was superadded, by the ministry of Moses, 430 years after. The stranger who wished to keep the passover, was required first to circumcise all his males, and then he became as *one born in the land*, i. e. he was to all intents and purposes under the full operation of the covenant established with Abraham and his seed. On the other hand, the Edomite, *who sprung from the loins of Abraham*, was put upon the *same footing* with the Egyptian who descended from Ham: the children of both were received in the fourth generation; neither of them came in upon the plea of consanguinity with Abraham: nor were they admitted into the commonwealth of Israel under the idea of the children of Israel having Abraham for their literal father, but formally and explicitly upon the ground of their being "*the congregation of the Lord.*" Deut. xxiii. 8.* But, being once incor-

* קהל יהוה "The church of Jehovah:" the very expression which is translated again and again in the New Testament, εκκλησια θεου, "the church of God." The fact is, that all our language in sacred things is borrowed from the Old Testament; and

porated with the natural seed, in that great congregation, they, too, were viewed as of the covenanted seed; and they transmitted their privilege to their children in their generations.

(3.) By the covenant made with Abraham he acquired the prerogative of being the "*father of many nations.*" This article is, of itself, a demonstration that the covenant was of a much wider extent than all the literal descendants of Abraham in the line of Jacob put together. They never did make but *one* nation. There is a marked distinction between them and these "many nations;" who are evidently the same with "all the families of the earth," that were to be blessed in Abraham. The apostle Paul interprets the phrase by another; his being "the *heir of the world;*" and peremptorily denies its restriction to the literal seed. *Rom.* iv. 13, 16, 17.

The argument is short. Abraham's seed comprehends all those to whom he is the father: but he is the father of many nations; therefore, these many nations are to be accounted as his seed. Again: the covenant was made with Abraham and with his seed: therefore, the covenant embra-

cannot be understood without a reference to it; and those who clamourously demand the origin of every thing Christian to be produced from the New Testament, show that they understand neither the New Testament nor the Old, nor yet that very Christianity about which they prate. Christianity is more, a great deal more, than a few doctrines.

ced these many nations who are included in his seed.

3. This covenant was affirmed in an extraordinary manner; *viz.* by the rite of *circumcision. This*, saith God, *is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee, every man-child among you shall be circumcised.* The uses of this rite were two.

First. It certified to the seed of Abraham, by a token in the flesh of their males, that the covenant with their great progenitor was in force; that they were under its full operation; and entitled to all the benefits immediately derived from it. But circumcision had a further use; for,

Secondly, The apostle Paul informs us that it was *a seal of the* RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE FAITH *which* Abraham *had, being yet uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that* RIGHTEOUSNESS MIGHT BE IMPUTED *unto them also. Rom.* iv. 11. In this connexion it certified,

That Abraham was justified by *faith*.

That the doctrine and the privilege of the "righteousness of faith," were to be perpetuated among his seed by the operation of God's covenant with him:

That the justification of a sinner is by faith alone; "righteousness" being "imputed" to all them that *believe*," and to them only; who by the

very fact of their *believing*, become, in the highest sense, children of Abraham, and are accordingly blessed with him.

While, therefore, the sign of circumcision was in every circumcised person, a seal of God's covenant with Abraham and with his seed, it was to all who walked in the faith of Abraham a seal of their personal interest in that same righteousness by which Abraham was justified.

From these general premises the conclusion is direct and irrefragable, that the covenant with Abraham was designed to assure the accomplishment of the second great promise made to him while he was yet in Ur of the Chaldees; and that the effect of it was to bring him and his family, with all who should join them in a kindred profession, *into a church estate*, i. e. was a *covenant ecclesiastical*, by which Jehovah organized the visible church, as one distinct spiritual society; and according to which all his after dealings with her were to be regulated. Hitherto she had been scattered, and existed in detached parts. Now it was the gracious intention of God to reduce her into a compact form that she might be prepared for the good things to come. Since Abraham was designated as the man from whom the MESSIAH was to spring; since he had signally glorified the Lord's veracity, not staggering at his promise through unbelief, he selected this his servant as

the favoured man in whose family he would commence the organization of that church in which he designed to perpetuate the righteousness of faith. With this church, as with a *whole*, composed, in the first instance, of Abraham's family, and to be increased afterwards by the addition of all such as should own his faith, was the covenant made. This is that covenant after which we are inquiring.

II. This covenant has never been annulled. The proof of the affirmative lies upon the affirmer. When? Where? and by whom was the act for annulling it promulged? The "vanishing away" of the ceremonial law has nothing to do with the Abrahamic covenant, but to illustrate, confirm, and diffuse its blessings. The former was a temporary constitution superadded for the purpose of giving effect to some provisions of the latter, and expired by its own limitation. The apostle Paul refutes the notion that the introduction of the ceremonial law, could at all prejudice the pre-existing covenant with Abraham: *Gal.* iii. 15—17. And if not its commencement, why its termination? And if the abolishing of the ceremonial law does not infer the cessation of the Abrahamic covenant, there is not a shadow of either proof or presumption that it has ceased. If there is, let it be produced. But not to rest the matter here, we may observe,

1st. That the promise of Abraham's being a father of many nations, who are, therefore, his seed, never was, nor could be fulfilled, before the Christian dispensation. The apostle Paul was certainly of this mind; for he proves the calling of the Gentiles from Abraham's covenant; and if the calling of the Gentiles to be fellow-heirs in the church of God with the literal descendants of the patriarch, was grounded upon his covenant, this, again, shows that they belong to that seed with whom it was made; and, consequently, that it is in full force and virtue at this hour. The apostle presses this point with great ardour; and places it before us in various lights. *If ye be Christ's*, says he, "*then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*" What promise? Not simply the promise of eternal life in Christ. There was no *necessity* of their being Abraham's seed to inherit this promise—but manifestly, the promise of Abraham's covenant to which they were entitled in virtue of their being his seed: i. e. the promise, *I will be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee.* If, then, they who are Christ's are Abraham's seed; and being so are heirs according to the promise; the covenant, containing the promise, is in full virtue, as they belong to the seed with which it was made.

2d. If the Abrahamic covenant is no longer in force, the church of God, as a visible public so-

ciety, is not, in any sense, connected with him by covenant relation. This may weigh light with those who discard the doctrine of a visible Catholic church; but it draws much deeper than they suspect. The whole administration of the covenant of grace proceeds upon the principle that there *is* such a church. All the ordinances are given to it; all the promises are made to it. To the elect, as such, they are not, cannot be given. The application of them would be impossible without a special revelation: and the whole administration of the covenant of grace, by visible means, would be at an end. Nor is a single instance to be found, excepting in virtue of immediate revelation, in which the Lord ever gave an ordinance or a promise to particular churches. They always receive their privileges in virtue of their being parts of the church universal. Now this church universal, which is the body of Christ, the temple of his Spirit, the depository of his grace, stands in no covenant relation to God, in her public character, if the covenant with Abraham is annulled. For if she does, then another covenant has been made with her. But no such covenant has been made. The new covenant which the Lord promised to make with her at the introduction of the evangelical dispensation, was to supersede, not the Abrahamic, but the Sinai-covenant. It is so far from setting aside,

that it implies, and establishes the former; for it is promised to her as that church which was organized and perpetuated under Abraham's covenant. If, therefore, that covenant is removed, and no other has replaced it, the church, in her social capacity, is further off from God than she was under the law; and all the mercies to which, in that capacity, she once had a claim, are swept away. But this is impossible. In fact, the scriptures uniformly suppose the existence of such public federal relations: and abound with promises growing out of them. Thus speaks the prophet—"The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the Lord. As for me, this is my *covenant with them*, saith the Lord: my Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever."—*Is.* lix. 21, 22.

This is a prediction of New Testament times: so the apostle applies it, *Rom.* xi. 26. And he applies it to the recovery of the Jews, which has not yet happened. The covenant, therefore, is in force, and it operates through the medium of Gentile converts; the Lord's Spirit has long ago departed out of the mouth of the Jews. But the promise was made to the church, in her *covenanted*

character; her members in constant succession are the "seed" out of whose mouth the divine Spirit shall not depart; and when the Jews are restored, they will be brought into this very covenanted church, and be again recognized as a part of the "seed." But why multiply words? There is no explaining the frequent recurrence of the inspired writers to the covenant of Abraham, nor any propriety in their reasoning, if it is not of perpetual operation.

3d. In discussing the great question concerning the rejection of the Jews, the vocation of the Gentiles, and the future restoration of the former, the apostle reasons upon principles which are most false and impertinent, if the Abrahamic covenant has ceased. *Rom.* xi. 17—24.

He tells the Gentiles, that they were "a wild olive tree;" and that the Jews were the "good olive tree"—This cannot refer to their natural state as sinners before God; for in this respect there was "no difference"—nor to their state as sinners saved by grace: for from this state there is no excision; it can refer to nothing but their visible *church estate;* i. e. to their public relation to God as a covenanted society. What, then, was this "good olive tree," from which the Jewish branches were "broken off;" while the Gentiles were "graffed in?" Evidently the visible church organized under the covenant made with Abra-

ham. There was no other from which the Jews could be cast off. The ceremonial law was superseded. It was no excision at all to be cut off from a church which did not exist; nor could the Gentiles be introduced into it. But what says the apostle? That the "olive tree" was cut down or rooted up? That it had withered trunk and branch? Or was no longer the care of the divine planter? Nothing like it! He asserts the continuance of the olive tree in life and vigour; the excision of some worthless branches; and the insertion of new ones in their stead. "Thou," says he, addressing the Gentile, "partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree." Translate this into less figurative language, and what is the import? That the church of God, his visible church, taken into peculiar relations to himself by the Abrahamic covenant, subsists without injury through the change of dispensation and of members. Branches indeed may be cut off, but the rooted trunk stands firm, and other branches occupy the places of those which are lopped away. The Jews are cast out of the church, but the church perished not with them. There was still left the trunk of the olive tree; there was still fatness in its roots: it stands in the same fertile soil, the covenant of God: and the admission of the Gentiles into the room of the excommunicated Jews, makes them a part of that covenanted church;

as branches grafted into the olive tree and flourishing in its fatness, are identified with the tree. It is impossible for ideas conceived by the mind of man, or uttered in his language, to assert more peremptorily the continuance of the church under that very covenant which was established with Abraham and his seed. And this doctrine, understood before the apostleship of Paul, was maintained by John the Baptist; "*Think not*," cried he to the multitudes who crowded around him, "*think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for verily I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.*" The hearers of the Baptist, like many modern professors of Christianity, supposed that the duration of the covenant with Abraham, and of the prerogative of the Jews as God's peculiar people, were the same. It is a mistake, replies the second Elijah; you may all be cast off; you may all perish; but the oath to Abraham shall not be violated. God will be at no loss to provide "seed" who shall be as much within his covenant as yourself, even though he should create them out of the stones of the earth. The threat was vain: it was empty noise; it was turning the thunders of God into a scarecrow for children, if the covenant with Abraham was not to survive the law of peculiarity, and be replenished with other seed than that which sprung from his loins according to the flesh.

CHURCH OF GOD.

No. III.

On the mode of perpetuating the Visible Church.

It has been shown, in the preceding number, tnat the covenant with Abraham and his seed, was an *ecclesiastical* covenant; i. e. was made with the *visible church*, and is of equal duration. We proceed to another and very important part of our inquiry. *How were the covenant character and privilege to be transmitted from one age to another, till the consummation of all things?* Or, which is the same, *how was a succession of the "seed" to be preserved?*

This was to be accomplished in two ways.

1st. In all cases of original connexion with the church; that is, where the individual was without the bond of the covenant, previous to his being of adult age, he was to be admitted on his *personal faith* in that religion which the covenant was instituted to secure, This term of communion with the people of God has never varied. It remains, at the present hour, precisely what it was at the

formation of the Abrahamic covenant. They who do not enjoy, or have not embraced, the gospel, are "without." They are "strangers," "foreigners," "aliens," "afar off," and must continue such till they come to the knowledge of the truth. No Jewish or Pagan foot must cross the threshold of the church, without "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." About this there is no dispute. About the qualifications requisite in adults for their admission to the privileges of the church, there is not the same agreement.

Some think that a general profession of Christianity is all which she may exact; alleging in support of their opinion, the example of the apostles, who demanded, say they, nothing more than a confession that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God;* and therefore they conclude that nothing more ought to be demanded now.

But it is not to be denied that this proposition contains the substance of all the doctrines and predictions of the Old Testament, concerning the Redeemer's person and work. No man could give it his intelligent assent, without a knowledge of those doctrines and predictions; nor repose his hope upon their truth, without that divine faith which receives the *whole* testimony of God, and operates, with a purifying influence, upon the heart and life. The scriptures refer the existence

of such a confession, when not hypocritical, to a much higher cause, and attribute to the confession itself much stronger effects, than are even thought of by those who, at this day, would establish it as the all-comprehending term of Christian fellowship. "I give you to understand," says Paul, 1 Cor. xii. 3. "that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but *by the Holy Ghost*."—And John 1, Ep. v. 1. 5. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is *born of God*."—"Who is he that *overcometh the world*, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." It is evident, upon the very face of these passages, that nothing was further from the mind and the practice of the Apostles, than the recognizing as Christians and the admitting into Christian fellowship, all or any who barely assented to the general proposition, that "Jesus is the Christ." Much less can such an admission be justifiable now, when millions learn, from mere habit, to repeat that proposition without weighing its sense, or even comprehending its terms. Christianity is not a thing of *rote*. And there can be no doubt, that multitudes would flock to the church, reiterating as often as you would wish, their belief that "Jesus is the Christ;" who should, nevertheless, be found, upon a strict examination, to be either ignorant, or enemies, of every truth comprehended in their own creed. This cannot be. Christianity is not chargeable

with the madness of cherishing in her own bosom, and that designedly, the seeds of her own destruction.

Some think that soundness in the doctrines of revelation, without scrutiny into practical character, or, at least, without solicitude on that point, is sufficient to justify admission into the church, and to the enjoyment of her privileges.

This opinion is not more correct than the former. It strips the church of her responsibility on the score of moral purity; annihilates her duties with regard to the chief end of her creation; viz. that she might be the mother of a holy seed, of a "peculiar people, zealous of good works;" dissevers the connexion between faith in Christ and conformity to his image; and acts, not indeed upon the notion that provided a man's life be good, his faith is a matter of indifference; but upon its converse, equally absurd and abominable, that a right belief may dispense with the obligations of holiness.

Some think, that doctrinal soundness combined with fair morals, fixes the limit of our inquiries. This opinion, though far preferable to the others, labours, notwithstanding, under a material defect. It shuts out investigation of the history of a man's heart and conscience; in other words, of his religious experience. This must certainly form a part of his profession which is to be tried by the

rules of the written word. The gospel, if received in truth, has revolutionized his soul. It has taught him to hate sin, his own sin, and to abhor himself for it before God—It has taught him to renounce dependence upon his own righteousness; abjuring it, in every form and degree, as the ground of his acceptance with his judge; to rest, with absolute and exclusive reliance, upon the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ; and to live by faith upon him as the Lord his strength. They who have but slightly attended to facts, need not be told that it is very possible, and very common, to have a speculative orthodoxy and an unstained reputation, with as complete an absence of the whole of this spiritual efficacy of the gospel upon the heart, as if no such thing were either mentioned in the bible or existed in our world. And it would be strange indeed, if the church of God, in admitting men to her distinguished privileges, should never ask a question concerning the most glorious and only saving effect of that very gospel which her members are supposed to believe.

Some, in fine, think that religious experience is the sole test of admission into the church. Provided a man can satisfy them of his conversion, and they are not always hard to be satisfied; if he can relate a plausible story of his feelings; can talk of his distress, and of his comfort; and has learnt to deal in joys and ecstacies, it is enough:

How he came by his experience, he probably cannot tell, and his spiritual guides often omit to ask. And yet this is a point upon which often turns the discrimination between true and false in religion; between rational experience and fanaticism; between the good influences of the Spirit of God, and their counterfeits. It is lamentable that so large a proportion of conversions, which are the fruit of tumultuous meetings, and the theme of newspaper praise, prove to be of this class. Dark views, gross ignorance, and even flat contradictions in the simplest truths of Christianity, are no obstacle. Thousands go from sin to God; from nature to grace; from condemnation to pardon; from despondency to rapture; and when interrogated about the *process* by which this marvellous transition was accomplished, have little or nothing to say, but that *they have felt so!* And, what is still more astonishing, they have been "translated from darkness to light," without being illuminated! For the uttering of incoherent exclamations, and the chattering over a set of phrases, though accompanied with vehement passion, with shrieks and fallings, and faintings, and fits, and trances, must not pass for divine illumination, nor divine influence of any sort. When we consider the mechanism of the human affections, and how rapidly emotion is propagated, by sympathy, through promiscuous crowds, we can explain all the phe

nomena which, in this matter, have lately attracted the public wonder, without recourse to supernatural agency; and must be convinced that nothing can be more precarious than the tenure by which these sudden converts hold their profession. And although many, to whom, therefore, these remarks will not apply, disclaim that wild frenzy which others have rashly mistaken for an effusion of the divine Spirit, yet it is not easy to make *mere* experience the rule of estimating Christian character, and of admitting to Christian privilege; and at the same time keep clear of extravagances. For let the imagination, freed from the restraint of purified reason, be once excited; let it be impelled by a fervid but blind devotion, and it will rush, with resistless impetuosity, into excesses fit only to dishonour the Christian name, and to desolate the Christian church.—Wherever the understanding is dismissed from religion, nothing but mischief can ensue; and this is always done, in a greater or less degree, where the exercises of the heart are assumed as the basis of our judgment without ascertaining their dependence upon knowledge.

Upon the whole we may conclude, that an adult, in order to his right reception into the Christian church,

Must be acquainted with, at least, the leading doctrines of revelation:

Must be able to "give a reason of the hope that is in him," by showing that these doctrines have operated upon his experience:

Must make an open, unequivocal avowal of the Redeemer's name: and,

Must be vigilant in the habitual discharge of his religious and moral duty.

He, in whom these things meet, is a Christian, and to be recognized as such by the Christian church.

But now arises another question. Does the church, in bringing an adult to the test of the foregoing requisites, and pronouncing him worthy of her communion, act upon the principle of her *discovering* that he is a regenerated person; and that he *really is*, in the sight of God, what he *appears to be* in the sight of men?

By no means. The church, as conducted by a system of instituted ordinances, which men administer, is altogether *visible;* and it would be absurd to make an invisible quality the criterion of visible communion.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who fell into no mistakes, actually did admit an unconverted man, a hypocrite, a traitor, a devil, into the number not only of his disciples, but even of his apostles: thereby instructing his church that the secret state of the soul before God is not to be her rule of judgment. He knew, from the beginning, who

should betray him; and yet permitted the infidel to mingle in his train; to continue in his service, to share the honours of his sincere followers; and never cast him off till he had proved his rottenness by an overt act of treachery. All which would have been impossible, had the reality of a gracious condition been the ground of church connexion. And it betrays something very different from modesty to set up a term of religious fellowship which would convict the master himself of corrupting his own church.

God has reserved to himself the prerogative of exploring secret motives. "I, Jehovah, search the heart. I try the reins." And it is a source of ineffable consolation that none but himself *can* try them. The obtrusion of the creature is completely barred out by his own unchangeable constitution. I bless him for it. I had rather perish than have my heart searched by men or angels; and I put them all at defiance to declare what passes in my breast any further than I myself inform them by my own act. Whoever, therefore, maintains that the *reality* of conversion is the reason of admission to Christian privilege, lays down a rule which never can be applied. There are none who furnish more conclusive evidence of its nullity, than those who most warmly contend for it. A single observation will put this in a strong light. They who, without the aid of a revelation either

from myself or my creator, can read my hidden thoughts on one occasion, can read them on every other. Therefore, if they can ascertain sincerity in religion they can equally ascertain it in their civil transactions; and consequently would never be imposed upon. But to such lengths they do not pretend to go; that is, they proclaim the falsity of their own doctrine, and the futility of their own rule. How dare they who cannot detect a perjury in the custom-house, or a lie in the shop, represent themselves as able to detect hypocrisy in religious profession? It is foolish conceit; it is contemptible quackery. Take notice how they use their own rule. They get a man to recount his experience. If satisfied with that, they set him down as converted. You see, that for the facts on which they build their judgment, they have only his own word; and yet they talk of ascertaining his state! Two plain questions on this head, and we shall leave them:

If their man should say nothing at all, how would they find out his state?

If he should happen to amuse them with a tale of experience such as they approve, and he never felt, where is their *knowledge* of his state?

As for those who undertake to *discern spirits*, without producing their authority from the father of spirits, under his broad seal of miracles, nothing is so amazing about them as their effrontery.

All sober men should eschew them as jugglers and impostors. An astrologer who cast nativities from the aspect of the planets; or a strolling gipsey who predicts the history of life from the palm of a child's hand, is as worthy of credence as they.

The result is, that when, according to our best judgment, we perceive those things which are the known and regular effects of Christian principle, we are to account their possessor a brother, and to embrace him accordingly. In other words, *a credible profession of Christianity*, is all that the church may require in order to communion. She may be deceived; her utmost caution may be, and often has been, ineffectual to keep bad men from her sanctuary. And this, too, without her fault, as she is not omniscient. But she has no right to suspect sincerity, to refuse privilege, or to inflict censure, where she can put her finger upon nothing repugnant to the love or the laws of God.

It must of necessity be so. For the principle now laid down is inseparable from human nature, and pervades every form of human society. Examine them all, from the great commonwealth of the nation down to the petty club, and you will meet with no exception. When an alien becomes a citizen, he takes an oath of allegiance to the government. When one becomes a member of a

literary, a mechanical, a benevolent, or any other association, he accedes to its constitution and rules. These are their *professions* respectively. They may profess falsely: But that is nothing to the society, so long as the falsehood is locked up within their own breasts: They are accounted, and rightly accounted, "good men and true," till they forfeit their reputation and their immunities by some criminal deed. Who doubts that individuals unfaithful in heart to their engagements, are scattered through all these combinations? Yet who would deem it better than madness to decide on their external relations without a warrant from external acts? What horrible confusion would follow a departure from this maxim? Nothing can be true which contradicts any of the great analogies of God's works; nor can his church be established by the operation of a principle which, in every other case, would destroy all confidence and intercourse among men.

A profession, then, of faith in Christ, and of obedience to him, not discredited by other traits of character, entitles an adult to the privileges of his church. And this is the first way of securing a succession of the covenanted seed, and of handing down their blessings to the end of time.

But the *second* and principal channel of conveyance is *hereditary descent.* The relations and benefits of the covenant are the *birthright* of every

child born of parents who are themselves of "the seed." "I will establish," says God, "my covenant between me and thee, and *thy seed after thee, in their generations*, for an everlasting covenant." The substance of which, to repeat a preceding proposition, manifestly is, that as soon as a new individual is generated from this seed, he is within the covenant, and, according to its tenour, God is his God. This is a characteristic of every public covenant which God has made with man. Take, for example, the covenants with Adam and with Noah. Every human creature comes into being under the full operation of both these covenants. In virtue of the one, he is an "heir of wrath;" and in virtue of the other, an heir of promise to the whole extent of the covenant-mercy. He has the faithfulness of God pledged to him, as one of Noah's covenanted seed, that the world shall not be drowned by a second deluge; nor visited by another calamity to exterminate his race

Now, what imaginable reason can be assigned, why, in the covenant with his visible church, the uniform and consistent God should depart from his known rule of dispensation, and violate all the natural and moral analogies of his works and his government? It cannot be. There is no such violation; there is no such departure. Nor is it so much as pretended to have happened from Abraham till John the Baptist, or perhaps the day

of Pentecost. But what was in the ministry of the Baptist? What in the ministry of Jesus Christ? What in the effusion of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, to destroy a radical principle of that very church which John, and Jesus, and the Spirit of Jesus, were sent to bless and perfect? The notion is wild. And if, as has been already demonstrated, the covenant with Abraham and his seed was a covenant with the visible church—if this covenant has never been abrogated—if its relations and privileges, with an exception in favour of adults who desired to come in on the profession of their faith, were to be propagated in the line of natural generation, THEN, it follows, that the infant seed of persons who are under this covenant, are themselves parties to it; are themselves members of the church; and whatever privileges that infant seed had, at any given period in the history of the church, it *must retain* so long as the covenant is in force. But the covenant is in force at this moment; therefore, at this moment, the covenant privileges of the infant seed are in force. Visible membership is one of those privileges; therefore the infant seed of church members are also members of the church.

However men may corrupt and have corrupted the ordinance of God, so as to reject the visible means which he has appointed for perpetuating his church, yet as they cannot overset his govern-

ment, they are compelled to see the principle here contended for, operating, with irresistible force, every hour before their eyes. For whether they will, or whether they will not, the fact is, that the church of God, with an exception before mentioned, ever has been, and is now, propagated by hereditary descent. There is not, perhaps, in any nation under heaven that has been once christianized, and has not sinned away the gospel, a single Christian who has not received his privileges as an inheritance from his fathers. Let us then beware how, in opposing infant church membership, we fight against a principle which is wrought into the essence of all God's constitutions respecting

CHURCH OF GOD.

No. IV.

Initiating Seal.

On the "sign of circumcision" which God annexed to his covenant with Abraham, as "a seal of the righteousness of faith," some remarks have already been made. In its immediate reference to the Patriarch's seed, it certified that they belonged to the church of God, and were entitled to all the privileges which she derived immediately from the covenant with their great progenitor. A right to this seal, was the *birthright* of every Hebrew; and it was accordingly applied to him when he was eight days old. That this right was not peculiar to the literal, but was common to the covenanted, seed, is clear from the case of proselytes, who having cleaved to the God of Abraham, were themselves circumcised, and imparted to their children all the prerogatives of a native Hebrew.

On the supposition, then, that circumcision had

not been laid aside, as the covenant, of which it was the seal, has not, it would be at this hour the duty of professing parents to circumcise their infant sons; that is, to have an interest in God's covenant certified to their seed, by applying the seal of it to their male infants. Circumcision, however, having been discontinued, the question is, whether the seal which it conveyed has been discontinued with it? If so, then these two consequences follow.

First, That there is no longer any initiatory seal for adults, any more than for infants; because an *abolished* seal can no more be applied to a man than to a babe; and thence,

Secondly, That the church of God is under the operation of an *unsealed covenant*; that is, that God has withdrawn the sensible pledge of his covenant relation to her. If it be said that Baptism is appointed to be the initiatory seal under the New Testament dispensation, and is directed to be applied to believing adults, the plea is true; but it concedes much more than suits the purpose of many who urge it.

(1.) As a seal must certify something; as no seal was ever ordained by God but as the seal of his covenant; and as no wise man will pretend that every lawfully baptized adult, is undoubtedly within the covenant of grace, it concedes that God *has a visible church in sealed covenant with himself*,

distinct from that church which is composed of the elect only.

(2.) As he has never made a *new visible church;* nor drawn back from his old engagements, this plea concedes, that the church now in existence is the very church organized by the Abrahamic covenant; and that covenant the very one which is sealed to her by baptism. Then,

(3.) That baptism has come in the place of circumcision; and as adults are ordered to be baptized, without a syllable of the exclusion of infants, the application of circumcision must furnish the rule for that of baptism. And consequently, this same plea which is designed to preclude infant baptism, turns out to be a demonstration of its divine right. Thus the point before us would be completely settled. But to wave this advantage, and to put the subject in another light, let us distinguish, in this matter of circumcision, between the substance and form. The substance of the ordinance, that which properly constituted the *seal*, was the certification to the person sealed, of his interest in God's covenant. The rite of circumcision was no more than the *form* in which the seal was applied. These two things must not be confounded. For, on the one hand, the *rite* may be, and was, and is yet, performed without any sealing whatever. The sons of Ishmael were circumcised, but they belonged not to

the covenanted seed, and therefore circumcision sealed nothing to them. The Jews are circumcised still, but being cut off from the olive-tree, being cast out of the church of God, and suspended from the privileges of the covenanted seed, their circumcision is nothing. On the other hand, the seal had been the same, although administered by a different rite. The amputation of a toe, the perforation of an ear, the sprinkling of blood, or the anointing with oil, would have answered the purpose as well as circumcision. The essence of the seal lying not in the *rite*, but in the divine sanction which is given by that rite to claims on God's covenant. Now as it is self-evident, that this sanction may be conveyed under any form which he shall please to prescribe, it is a gross errour in reasoning to conclude, that because the ancient form is laid aside, therefore the seal and all things certified by it are laid aside too. It would be quite as accurate to infer, that because the form of church polity is altered, therefore the church no longer exists. If it be objected, that "however distinguishable the seal and the sealing rite be from each other in theory, they are inseparable in fact; as the former cannot be applied to us but through the medium of the latter; and therefore if this be abolished, the other is to us as if it did not exist;" I reply, that the objection concludes equally against the existence of a church

upon earth; for it must appear in some visible form, or else, *to us*, it is no church: and the argument is still good, that if the abolition of a particular form of sealing God's covenant, involves the abolition of the seal itself, then the abolition of a particular form of his church, involves the abolition of the church itself. The objection assumes the very point in debate, viz. that the seal of the covenant and a particular form of the sealing rite are co-existent, and perish together. Whereas it is contended, that the cessation of the latter does by no means imply the cessation of the former; but that the seal may remain the same, although the rite be changed; and may pass, in its full virtue and efficacy, through successive forms of application. In truth, it is a fundamental principle, that *forms of dispensation do not affect the substance of the things dispensed.* Otherwise, the covenant of grace has been changed often. But if *five* forms of dispensation have not touched the substance of the covenant of grace; nor *three* forms of dispensation, the substance of the covenant with Abraham; why should the disuse of a particular mode of sealing this latter, draw after it the destruction of the seal itself? and of all the relations and benefits sealed? The issue is, that circumcision may be laid aside without infringing upon the covenant to which it was appended. It has been laid aside, and the question is, What has been

substituted in its place? As none of the parties to this controversy pretend that it has been succeeded by any other ordinance than baptism, the only alternative is, either that nothing at all has been substituted for it, or else that the substitute is baptism.

If nothing—then while the covenant is in force, and a covenant which must be sealed too, there is no method of applying the seal.

If nothing—then a privilege has been taken away from the church, and she has received no compensation; contrary to the whole tenour of God's dealing with her, and to the positive declarations of his word.

If nothing—then the apostle Peter led his hearers astray, in assuring them that the "promise was to them and their children," which, as Jews, they could not understand of any other promise than that made to Abraham; nor in any other sense, than as asserting the joint interest of their infants, with themselves, in the covenant of God, and, consequently, their right to the seal of that interest. One of the most stubborn and rational prejudices of the Jews against the Christian dispensation, was the fear of losing the privileges to which, as Abraham's seed, they had a covenant claim; and which they, with better excuse than Christians *now*, supposed to be inseparable from the law of Moses. "You mistake the matter,"

cries Peter, full of the Holy Ghost, "there is nothing in the gospel of Jesus Christ, nor the new economy which he has introduced, to destroy or abridge the mercies held out and secured by the covenant with Abraham. The Saviour is, himself, the chief blessing of that covenant. The evangelical dispensation displays its provisions in clearer light, and greater extent. The promise subsists in unabated virtue, and with increased glory; it is, at this moment, as much as at any moment past, *to you and to your children;* but it is also to *all them that are afar off, even as many as the Lord your God shall call.*" How could the words of Peter be interpreted by a Jew? In no other way than this, that neither the covenant of Abraham, nor the seal of that covenant, nor the interest of his infant seed in it was abrogated, or to be abrogated, by the Christian dispensation. How could they be interpreted by a Gentile? In no other way than this, that persons who "were afar off," (the very phrase by which Paul describes the Gentiles,) being called by the gospel, should come into the full possession of all the benefits which are contained in the covenant with Abraham; that is, should enjoy, equally with the Jew, whatever, according to the nature of that covenant, is comprehended in the declaration, *I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed;* and equally with the Jew, the pledge and seal of this his privilege. The

Apostle speaks of a promise well-known and highly prized. "*The* promise," without any explanation. "What promise?" inquires the Gentile. Ask your brother, the Jew, rejoins the Apostle; he understands me thoroughly. It is the promise made to his father, Abraham; that in *his seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.* "True," you will interrupt, "this is the Apostle's meaning, and it says not a syllable of circumcision, nor of its relation to baptism; nor of infant church membership." Yes, but is a promise in Abraham's covenant: it depends upon the immutability of that covenant. For no engagement whatever, can survive the covenant which gives it birth and validity. And this very promise, the Holy Ghost being judge, was to be so fulfilled, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles; which must mean that they and their seed should be admitted to the privileges granted to Abraham and his seed: so that the children of professing Christians, not less than themselves, should be within the covenant, and entitled to its seal. Thus the Jews evidently understood the Apostle; for among all their objections to the Christian system, they never objected the *exclusion of their infant seed from the church of God.* If, therefore, nothing has come in the place of circumcision, the Apostle acted disingenuously with his Jewish hearers; and quieted their appre-

hension by a fraud upon their consciences. The fraud extended to the Gentile converts; for it referred them to the Jewish standard of interpretation; and every one of the inspired penmen of the New Testament is accessary to its influence, as there is not a sentence in all their writings to correct the errour; and the deception will not end even with *them*—*******!

But if these things cannot be maintained—If there is no such mockery as a seal without a mode of sealing, and the primitive form of circumcision is abolished—If God has not stripped his church of a privilege, without giving her an equivalent—If the holy Apostle did not abuse the understanding of his hearers, nor sport with their faith in his veracity—then is baptism the substitute for circumcision.

But as this conclusion may be thought too strong for the general argument preceding it, let us submit it to a more direct proof, by inquiring into the scriptural account of both circumcision and baptism. And, *First*, let us see how this account stands with regard to them *separately*. It will be seen in the following contrast.

CIRCUMCISION,	BAPTISM,
1. Was an initiatory rite, by which the circumcised were owned as of the covenanted seed, and of the people of God.	1. Is an initiatory rite, by which the baptized are numbered among the disciples of Christ, and the members of the church of God.

2. Was a seal of the righteousness of faith. Rom. iv. 11. i. e. of the Justification of a sinner through the righteousness of the surety embraced by faith.	2. The person is baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, (Act. ii. 38.) which is through faith in his blood; so that God is just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.
3. Was an emblem and a means of internal sanctity. *The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.* Deut. xxx. 6. See also ch. x. 16.	3. Is a sign and means of our sanctification in virtue of our communion with Christ.—*Buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.* Rom. vi. 4. See also 1 Pet. iii. 21.

The parallel is certainly striking: Circumcision and baptism do both put a mark upon their subjects, as belonging to that society which God hath set apart for himself. They both signify and seal that wondrous change in the state of a sinner, whereby, being justified by faith, he passes from condemnation into acceptance with God; which doctrines of pardon and acceptance are exhibited in that society alone, which, under the name of his church, God hath consecrated to himself, and of which he hath appointed the circumcised and baptized to be esteemed members. Both represent, and are means of obtaining, that real purity which is effected by the spirit of Christ; and is

the characteristic of all those members of his church who are justified by faith in his blood. Such a coincidence cannot be casual. It bespeaks design. And seeing that circumcision and baptism do thus substantially answer the same ends, and that the former has ceased, the only sound conclusion is, that it has been succeeded by the latter. Change of dispensation was a sufficient reason why the form of sealing the covenant dispensed should also be changed; and the points of difference between baptism and circumcision, as covenant seals, are only such as were demanded by the nature of the change: the former being much better adapted to a more extensive and spiritual dispensation than the latter. And this is an additional consideration to show that the one has been substituted in the room of the other.

Let us proceed in our inquiry by examining, *Secondly*, into the scriptural manner of representing circumcision and baptism when they are spoken of *together;* or when baptism is mentioned in connexion with the covenant of which circumcision was the seal.—Take two examples.

1. The Apostle Peter, in his famous address to which there has already been frequent reference, assigns the perpetuity of Abraham's covenant, and the validity of its promise, as a reason why his Jewish hearers should be *baptized.* *Repent*, says he, *and be baptized every one of you, in the name of*

Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; for the promise is unto you and to your children. But how could this promise, being still assured to them and to their children, be a reason for their baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, unless baptism were a seal of that same promise as exhibited in the new economy? "Your circumcision sealed to you," says the Apostle, "your interest in the covenant with Abraham, as it was exhibited under the law: baptism seals your interest in that covenant, as it is exhibited in perfection under the Gospel. If you refuse the Lord Jesus, and the initiating ordinance of his dispensation, you refuse the better things which God has provided for you. If you yield yourselves up to the Lord Jesus Christ, you will have all that the promise contains in its application to this better state of things, sealed unto you; *therefore*, repent and be baptized." In this view, the argument is conclusive. In any other, it is of no force at all. What persuasion to baptism could there be in the consideration that the promise was to them and their children, if baptism had no relation to the promise? and what relation could it have unless as a seal, occupying the same place with regard to the promise under the new dispensation, which was occupied by circumcision under the old? Admitting this, every thing is clear. Two initiatory rites of the

same general import, cannot exist together. The dispensation by Christ Jesus takes place of the dispensation by Abraham, with all the additions by Moses; the form of sealing the covenant under this, takes place of the form of sealing it under those. The greater contains all that was contained in the less, and supersedes it. Baptism supplants circumcision.

2. In the epistle of Paul to the Colossians, is the following passage. "*In whom*," viz. Christ, "*also ye are* CIRCUMCISED *with the* CIRCUMCISION *made without hands, in putting off the* BODY OF THE SINS OF THE FLESH, *by the* CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST; *buried with him in* BAPTISM, *wherein also ye are* RISEN *with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.*" Chap. ii. 11, 12.

This is a very extensive proposition, made up of a number of subordinate ones which it is necessary distinctly to weigh.

1st. Both circumcision and baptism are to be viewed as signs of *spiritual mercies.* It is for this reason alone, that they are or can be employed as *terms* to convey the idea of such mercies.

2d. Circumcision was a sign of regeneration, and of communion with Christ, as the fountain of spiritual life. The apostle is treating of a believer's *completeness in Christ*—of *circumcision in Christ.* That his meaning might not be mistaken, he explains himself of the *inward grace*, calling it,

"the *circumcision made without hands*," and to cut off all misconception, he explains his explanation, declaring this "circumcision without hands," to be, *the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ.*

3d. Baptism, too, is a sign of regeneration, and of communion with Christ, as the fountain of spiritual life.

In baptism, saith Paul, ye are "buried *with Christ*," "ye are risen *with him*," through a divine faith, "the faith of the operation of God."—Whereas ye were "dead in sins, and the *uncircumcision of your flesh*," (uncircumcision put for the state of irregeneracy,) God hath *quickened you together with Christ.*

Collect now the result. A believer's sanctification, in virtue of union with Christ, Paul declares to be represented by both circumcision and baptism; for he expresses his doctrine by these terms indifferently; and annexes to them both, the same spiritual signification. He has, therefore, *identified* the two ordinances: and thus, by demonstrating that they have one and the same use and meaning, he has exhibited to our view the very same seal of God's covenant, under the forms of circumcision and baptism respectively. But as the same thing cannot subsist in different forms at the same time: and as the first form, viz. circumcision, is laid aside; it follows, that the

seal of God's covenant is perpetuated under the second form, viz. baptism; and that it signifies and seals in a manner suited to the evangelical dispensation, whatever was previously signified and sealed by the rite of circumcision.

If we again inspect the Apostle's proposition, we shall find, that he directs us to this conclusion, as well by the structure of his phraseology, as by the force of his argument. For, on the one hand, by the indiscriminate use of the terms circumcision and baptism, he appears to assume, as an indisputable fact, the substitution of the latter in place of the former; nor is it easy to conceive why he should discourse in this allusive manner, if the exchange were not perfectly understood among Christians: and, on the other hand, his language is so framed, as to assert that exchange. "Circumcised—in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the *circumcision of Christ;* buried with him in *baptism.*" What can the apostle intend, by the "*circumcision* of Christ?" Doubtless, not the literal rite, for this would destroy at once the whole of his reasoning on the article of sanctification, in the same way as it is destroyed by those who interpret the phrase, "buried with him in baptism," of submersion of the body in the act of baptising. The apostle cannot so trifle. By the "circumcision of Christ," he means that righteousness of faith, that mortifi-

cation of sin, that quickening influence, which flow from Christ, and were signified by circumcision. But that same righteousness of faith, and mortification of sin, and quickening influence, are also signified by baptism. But circumcision and baptism are external signs, which the apostle recognizes by specifying the things signified. In his transition from the one to the other, that is, from circumcision to baptism, as signifying, in their respective places, the very same blessings, he points to the transition which the church of God has made in fact, from the use of the former to the use of the latter. "With regard to the things signified," saith he, "there is no difference. The circumcision of Christ, and burial with him in baptism, are expressions of similar import; both declaring a believer's communion with him in his covenant mercies. With regard to the outward sign, fellowship with Christ in his death and resurrection, is represented in baptism, as putting off the body of "the sins of the flesh," was formerly represented in circumcision." If this be just, the inference is plain. Baptism is the *Christian* circumcision; the sign of baptism is the *Christian* form of sealing God's covenant, and, as such, has taken place of circumcision.

In confirmation of what is here advanced, let us look, for a moment, at the Apostle's account of Abraham's circumcision; Rom. iv. 11, &c. *He*

received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised; that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also. And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had, being yet uncircumcised.

Two great prerogatives are here ascribed to Abraham:

1. That he should transmit, in the line of the covenanted seed, the righteousness of faith to all generations and nations, so as to be, in a sense which belonged, and could belong, to no other man, the *Father of all them that believe.*

2. That with the righteousness of faith, he should transmit the seal of God's covenant, by the intervention of which it was to be perpetuated in the world, and actually imputed to all believers. For he was not only the father of all them that believe, but "the father of *circumcision*" to them.

This cannot mean the things *signified* by circumcision; for the apostle includes them in the first prerogative: and such an interpretation would convert into mere tautology, two propositions which are strongly distinguished from each other in the text. Circumcision, says the apostle, was a seal of the righteousness of the faith which Abra

ham had before he was circumcised: and he is the father of this circumcision to all them who walk in the steps of his faith; that is, he transmits the sign and seal along with the thing signified; conveying the evidence of God's covenant, as far and as wide as he conveys the blessing ministered by it, so that in whatever sense he is the father of them that believe, in the same sense is he the father to them of the seal of that righteousness which they embrace by faith: and further, the benefits conferred through the medium of Abraham's covenant, are asserted to be contemporary with the seal; both descending together from him to the last of the covenanted seed. The Apostle himself applies the principle, in the most positive terms, to the old and the new dispensation.

To the old dispensation—"The father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only," evidently those who, being his descendants, or incorporated with them, were literally circumcised. They inherited the seal from their father Abraham. This is not questioned. But the Apostle extends the principle.

To the new dispensation—The "father of circumcision to them also who walk in the steps of his faith." In what sense is Abraham the "father of circumcision," as the Apostle maintains, to them who never were literally circumcised, and

whom he expressly distinguishes from the circumcision? Manifestly in this sense, that they, being accounted of Abraham's seed, by their admission into the church of God, receive along with it, by inheritance from the patriarch, the seal of that covenant in which they are become interested. But circumcision is abolished long ago: yet Abraham is the father of circumcision to them at this hour. There is no avoiding a direct contradiction, but upon the principle, that though the outward rite of circumcision be discontinued, yet the substance of the ordinance, the seal of the covenant abides; is applied under another form, and is as really inherited by the people of God from their father Abraham in that form, as it was inherited by them of old in the form of circumcision. But now, if this seal does not subsist in the ordinance of baptism, it has no existence at all; and there is no possible sense in which Abraham is *to us* the father of circumcision. Therefore, baptism has succeeded to circumcision.

This reasoning draws after it, infallibly, the church membership of infants, and their right to baptism. For as there is no distinction between the mode in which Abraham has handed down the sealed privileges of God's covenant to those who were, and those who were not, of the circumcision; and as they were made over to the former, and their infant seed, they must also be made

over to the latter and their infant seed. It is no objection to the foregoing argument, that baptism is administered to *female* infants, whereas only *males* were circumcised : because the *extension* of a privilege can never be pleaded as a proof of its *abrogation ;* and the New Testament itself has positively annulled, in spiritual things, all pre-eminence and inferiority arising from condition or sex.

The only difficulty of any importance, under which the doctrine of these pages can labour, is the application of the seal of the righteousness of faith to multitudes who never had and never will have that righteousness ; consequently, that the seal of God's covenant, who is the God of truth, is, by his own appointment, very often affixed to a lie.

The difficulty is precisely the same in reference to circumcision as to baptism. The former was undoubtedly " a seal of the righteousness of faith;" and as undoubtedly was often applied to multitudes who never had that righteousness. Did the God of truth, therefore, *certify a lie?* Methinks so blasphemous a deduction, which is equally valid against his *acknowledged* institution of infant circumcision, as against his *disputed* institution of infant baptism, should make sober men, who cannot escape from it, suspect the soundness of their views. It is, more-

over, the same difficulty which occurs in the celebration of the Lord's supper, and in the baptism of adults; unless we can be assured that *all* the recipients are *true converts.* But, indeed, the difficulty itself is created by erroneous notions of the nature of God's church; by confounding visible members with his elect—and his covenant to the church, with his covenant of grace in Christ Jesus. A proper application of this distinction will remove it, and *demonstrate that the seal of God's covenant, does, in every instance, certify absolute truth, whether it be applied to a believer, or to an unbeliever; to the elect, or to the reprobate.*

CHURCH OF GOD.

No. V.

Infant members.

In our preceding numbers, we have given a general view of the Church of God, as one great visible society which he has taken into peculiar relations to himself. We traced its origin, as an *organized whole*, up to the Abrahamic covenant, of which we explained the nature, and proved the perpetuity. We also investigated the uses of its initiating rite, viz. circumcision; which, we assigned reasons to show, has been exchanged, under the evangelical dispensation, for the ordinance of baptism: and we touched, in general terms, upon the conclusion which our premises justify, respecting the ecclesiastical condition and privileges of infants born of believing parents. Having avowed our pursuasion, that they are, in virtue of their birth, members of the church of God, and entitled, during their infancy, to baptism in his name, we shall, in this number, state our con-

clusion more fully, and shall strengthen it with some auxiliary considerations.

The reader, on looking back to No. III. of this series, will find the following paragraph.

"If, as has been already demonstrated, the covenant with Abraham and his seed was a covenant with the visible church—if this covenant has never been abrogated—if its relations and privileges, with an exception in favour of adults who desired to come in on the profession of their faith, were to be propagated in the line of natural generation, THEN, it follows, that the infant seed of persons who are under this covenant, are themselves parties to it; are themselves members of the church; and whatever privileges that infant seed had at any given period in the history of the church, it *must retain* so long as the covenant is in force. But the covenant is in force at this moment; therefore, at this moment, the covenant privileges of the infant seed are in force. Visible membership is one of those privileges; therefore the infant seed of church members are also members of the church."

This, then, is the ground on which we take our stand in pleading the cause of the children whom God has given us. We account them members of his church, not because *tradition* has called them so; not because the *practice* of the church has treated them as such; but because he consti-

tuted them such by his own commandment and covenant which he has never revoked until this day.

To insist, therefore, that we shall produce, from the New Testament, a precept directly instituting the church membership of infants, is to make a demand with which we are under no obligation to comply. Such a precept was not necessary. The relation we are inquiring into had been instituted long before; it had subsisted without one moment's interruption for more than nineteen centuries. During this great lapse of ages it had enlisted on its side, in addition to its divine original, the most irrefragable prejudices of antiquity, the most confirmed national habit, and the fastidious jealousy of prerogative. In this state of its prevalence was the evangelical dispensation announced. If the same relation of infants to the church was to continue under the New Testament form, nothing is more easy than to assign the reason why it was not instituted anew. The principle was undisputed; it was acted upon as a principle which the change of dispensation did not touch; and consequently, a new institution was superfluous. The silence of the New Testament on this head, is altogether in favour of those who maintain that the union of parents with the church of God, includes their children also. But on the supposition that this principle was to

operate no longer; that the common interest of children with their parents in God's covenant was to cease; the silence of the New Testament is one of the most inexplicable things which ever tortured the ingenuity of man. If there is any point of external privilege which ought to have been settled with the most definite precision, one would imagine that this is the point. But we are taught to believe, that a constitution which is engrafted upon a principle that penetrates the essence of human society; which coincides with the genius of every other divine constitution respecting man; which is incorporated with his animal, his intellectual, and his moral character; which is interwoven with every ligament and fibre of his heart, shall be torn away; and yet the statute book of the kingdom in which this severity originates, shall contain no warrant for executing it, nor a syllable to soothe the anguish which it has inflicted! Is it thus that God deals with his people? Does this look like his wonted condescension to their infirmities? Does it bear the character of that loving kindness and tender mercy which belong to him who "knows their frame, and remembers that they are dust?"

When the economy of Moses was to be superseded by that of Jesus Christ, he prepared the way in the most gradual and gentle manner; he showed them from their own scriptures, that he had done

only what he had intended and predicted from the beginning; he set before their eyes a comparative view of the two dispensations, to satisfy them that they had lost nothing, but had gained much by the exchange. When they were "dull of hearing," he bore with their slowness; when they were extremely unwilling to part with Moses, he stooped to their infirmities; and persevered in his lenity, till the destruction of their city, their sacrifices, their temple, their nation, left their further demur ring without the shadow of an excuse. But when he touched them in the point of most exquisite sensibility—when he passed a sword through their souls by cutting off their children, unable to dis tinguish between good and evil, from all the interest which they once had in his church, the heavy mandate is preceded by no warning, is accompanied with no comfort; is followed by nothing to replace the privation; is not even supported by a single reason! The thing is done in the most summary manner, and the order is not so much as entered into the rule of faith! The believing mother hears that the "son of her womb" is shut out from the covenant of her God, but hears not why! Is this the ordinance of him who, "as a father pitieth his children, so pities them that fear him?" It cannot be!

Conceding, then, to the opposers of our children's claim as members of the Christian church,

all that they ask with regard to the *silence* of the New Testament, that very concession works their ruin. If their views are correct, it could not have been thus silent. Out of their own mouths we draw their conviction; and cast them in the judgment by the very evidence which they offer in their vindication.

The case is now reversed. Instead of *our* producing from the New Testament such a warrant for the privileges of our infant seed, as they require, we turn the tables upon them; and insist, that *they* shall produce scriptural proof of God's having *annulled the constitution under which we assert our right.* Till they do this, our cause is invincible. He once granted to his church the right for which we contend; and nothing but his own act can take it away. We want to *see the act of abrogation;* we must see it in the *New Testament;* for there it is, if it is at all. Point it out, and we have done. Till then we shall rejoice in the consolation of calling upon God as our God, and the God of our seed.

2. We have before remarked, that the exclusion of infants from the church of God, contradicts all the analogies of his external dispensations towards men.*

A correct reasoner will require the highest evidence of which the case is susceptible, before he

* Christian Magazine, Vol. I. p. 58—61.

admits a doctrine involving such a consequence. *General principles* are the great landmarks of truth. They furnish tests by which to try the soundness of those endless propositions which are generated by the ceaseless activity of the human mind. *One* of them, well understood and judiciously applied, is a better preservative from errour, than a million of those small arguments by which multitudes regulate their opinion and their conduct.

If, indeed, it is the will of God that children shall not be esteemed, during their infancy, as members of the New Testament church; and if he has promulged his will in this matter by any explicit statute, or by any act which necessarily infers such an appointment, there is an end to all our difficulties and disquisitions. "Thus saith Jehovah," discharges, at once, every human inquiry. But seeing that, in every public constitution, he always identified parents with their children; and that in every other department of his government this principle is conspicuous at the present hour, an argument of the most imperious sort thence arises in favour of our children's birthright as members of his church. For as his constitutions of nature and of grace agree with the most wonderful harmony; and as this agreement is the foundation of all those references to the former, by which the scriptures explain and illustrate the latter, it is "passing strange," that he should

introduce, into the heart of his church, a law which is at complete variance with the whole system of his creation and providence! that he should go out of his way to make an exception, not *for*, but *against*, his own people: refusing to them, as members of his church, the benefit of an ordinance which in other societies erected by his authority, he freely allows to mankind at large; and refusing it at the expense of resuming, without an equivalent, the grant which he formerly conveyed to them!

The case is still stronger when we reflect that the children of believing parents participate in all the *disasters* of the external church. If she be corrupted, the corruption infects them; if she be persecuted, the persecution smites them; if her mercies be sinned away, the punishment of the sin lights on them. Could they suffer more upon the supposition of their being really members? It seems, then, that they are to share in all her afflictions, without sharing in her privileges: that when evil overtakes her, they are to be treated as citizens; but when her immunities are dispensed, as aliens. So that the Lord our God *suspends* a leading principle of his physical and moral order, for the sake of barring the seed of his people from *privilege;* and permits it to take its full course for the infliction of *calamity!* This is more than incredible!

3. If the children of believing parents are not members of the church, before making a profession of their own faith, it follows, that from the day of their birth to the day of their conversion, they stand in no nearer relation to her than Pagans or Jews. A right to instruct, to warn, to entreat them, she certainly has; and she has the same right with regard to the Jew or the Pagan; but no *authority* over any of them. Her jurisdiction being necessarily confined to her own subjects; having no power to "judge them that are without;" and the children of her members being "without," she can take no cognizance of them which she might not take of infant or adult heathen who are within her reach. As it is their own act upon which they are admitted into her number, so it is that same act by which she acquires any right of directing them. Their parents she can enjoin to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," because God has rendered it a branch of parental duty; and she ought to enforce the observance of his law by all those spiritual means which he has confided to her zeal. But if parents be incapable of fulfilling their obligations; if they should happen to be separated from their families; to fail through negligence, or be cut off by death: or if the children prove refractory to parental admonition; in none of these cases can the church of God interpose any fur-

ther than to perform an act of voluntary benevolence. *Authority* is out of the question. For what authority can she have over those who never sought her fellowship; to whom she has denied her privileges; and whom she disowns as members? The same principle upon which she attempts to control the children of her members, would justify her in attempting to legislate for others who are without her pale, extending her discipline to Jews, Turks, Pagans; nay, to the whole world lying in wickedness. If she may not do this, the reason, and the only reason, is that they are not her members; which reason is equally valid in the case of children who are not her members. The alternative is plain; either the church of God must give up her care over youth who have not made a profession of their faith; or in order to exercise it must commit an act of usurpation.

But how can a Christian be reconciled to either part of the alternative? How can he persuade himself that children born of the people of God, consecrated to his fear, and declared by his inspired apostle to be "holy," are no more members of his church, than the savage who wanders upon the banks of the Missouri? How can he persuade himself, that among the solemn trusts of the Christian church, that most important one of superintending the youth, has been omitted? That she has received no charge, possesses no

power, and is under no responsibility, on this subject, further than to stimulate the individual efforts of parents, masters, or teachers? If she has received any other commandment; if, in her *social* character, she is bound to provide for "training up a child in the way in which he should go," then the children to be so trained, must be treated as her members; and are members in fact, for God never vested her with authority over any who are not.

To set this point in another light. God, in the ordinary course of his providence, does actually gather his "true worshippers" from the families of his people; and, for the most part, in the days of their youth. He does it most conspicuously in those churches which subject them, when young, to the most exemplary inspection. He has, on the other hand, frowned upon churches as they became remiss in this particular; his good Spirit has departed from them; and there are not a few which, at this hour, may trace their declension and the rapid approach of their desolation, to the neglect of their youth. But to deny that children are members of the church, is to deny both her duty and her right to exercise any public authority over them; and to deny it in opposition both to the blessing and the curse of God; is to smite the Redeemer's kingdom in the heart of one of its most precious interests, the youth; and to do

it much deeper and more effectual injury, than it is likely to suffer from the assaults of open enemies.

These consequences appear to us inevitable. Far from us be the thought of imputing them to those who reject the church membership of infants; or of asserting that they do in fact occur as regularly as we might expect. For, on the one hand, God does not permit Errour to mature all the deadly fruits which she is capable of bearing: and, on the other, the nature of human society is not to be subverted by theory. Let men profess what they please; let them renounce, and if they think fit, ridicule, our doctrine; it is nevertheless true, that they cannot get along in the religious any more than in the civil community, without more or less considering children as members. And it is their acting upon the very principle which they represent as unscriptural and absurd, that saves their churches from speedy destruction.

4. From the date of the covenant with Abraham, to the cessation of the Mosaic law, infants were undoubtedly members of God's church. The seal of his covenant was in their flesh; and it was deemed by every Hebrew a prerogative of inestimable worth. "Uncircumcised," was the most bitter and disdainful reproach which his mouth could utter. He would sooner lay his sons in the grave, than permit them go without

the token of their being Abraham's seed. On these facts we found three inquiries. The first relating to the privilege which God conferred upon his people; the second to the effect which the recalling of it produced on them; and the third to their state of feeling under the loss.

First. "The sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith," applied, by divine direction, to infant members of the church, was a high privilege.

This cannot, with even a show of reason, be disputed. That God should subject them to a painful rite which was of no use—that the indelible certification of his being their God as he had been the God of their fathers, should be coupled with no benefit—that he should draw them into covenant relations which were good for nothing, no man is sottish enough to pretend. Their condition, therefore, as members of his church, and the sacramental sign of it, was a real and an important privilege.

What has become of it?

If infants are no longer members of his church, it is taken away, and what has replaced it? Nothing, Nothing! then God has put the children of his people under the new dispensation, further from him than they were under the old. He has inverted his method of providence toward his church, which has uniformly been to bless her

with *progressive* light and favour. The communication of his grace and truth always increasing, never diminished. Each succeeding dispensation comprehending the whole mass of benefits which belonged to the preceding, and adding others of its own. But in this solitary, instance the course of his covenant is changed! And whereas he had formerly separated his people from the heathen that knew him not; had drawn around them a line of covenant goodness; had put their *little ones* within the holy circle; and had instructed them to cherish the distinction as, in his sight, of great price—yet now, when he is to enlarge their inheritance, and enrich their joys; to fulfil the promise of those good things which "eye had not seen, nor ear heard, neither had entered into the heart of man," he *begins* with telling them that though he will still be *their* God, he will no longer be the God of their *seed;* that he has cast their babes out of his church, over the line of his covenant, in among the "dogs." And all this, after he had sworn that he would "not break his covenant, nor alter the thing that had gone out of his mouth:" and having done it, commissions his apostle to declare, that "his gifts and his calling are without repentance;" i. e. that a grant which he has once made to his church, he never annuls! Believe it who can.*

* Rom. xi. 29. That the unchangeableness of God's gifts and

Let us, however, allow that we have misconstrued the divine covenant; and that infants born *after* the settlement of the new economy, had no such claim as had the infant posterity of Abraham. How did the arrangement affect the children of those who were the first members of the Christian church? For example, those who were added to her on the day of Pentecost? This is our

Second Inquiry.

The rule of God's proceeding against those who should reject the Messiah, was laid down by Moses; and is thus quoted and explained by the apostle Peter: "*Moses truly said unto the Fathers, a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that* EVERY SOUL WHICH WILL NOT HEAR THAT PROPHET, SHALL BE DESTROYED FROM AMONG THE PEOPLE. Act. iii. 22, 23.

calling refers to his church, we conclude from the whole scope of the apostle's reasoning in the context; part of which proves the recovery of Israel to the mercies of their fathers; and proves it from the consideration, that it is God's gracious design to reinstate them in their privileges; that this design is to be accomplished in virtue of the "gifts and calling" to their fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And as they cannot be reinstated but by embracing Christianity, these unchangeable "gifts and calling," must be continued in the New Testament church. Infant membership was, incontrovertibly, one of the gifts: therefore, if the children of his people are not members of his church, God *has* broken his covenant.

The sin of which the Jews were warned by their great law-giver, was their not obeying the voice of his great successor; that is, the sin of rejecting the Messiah. The punishment denounced against this sin, was "*destruction from among the* PEOPLE." Who were the people? And what was the destruction?

(1.) Who were the *people?*

Not the *nation* of the Jews. For, having committed the crime, they themselves fell under the penalty. Their nation was to be destroyed; whereas, according to the prediction of Moses, it was not the *people* that were to perish; but the *disobedient* who were to be destroyed from *among* the people; which implies the continuance of that people in the divine protection. It is a people, therefore, which was to survive the rejection of the Jews, and be placed in such circumstances of favour, as to render destruction from among them a great and terrible judgment.

Not the people whom God "hath chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy." For God never *cast away his people whom he foreknew.** They who committed the crime before us, never belonged to his people, and so could not be destroyed from among them; and they whom God had thus chosen did

* Rom. xi. 2. Acts xiii. 48.

not commit the crime. "*As many as were ordained unto eternal life*, BELIEVED."

Who then are "the people" from among whom the sinners were to be destroyed? If not the *Jewish* people, if not the *elected* people of God, it can be no other than that PEOPLE whom he owns as his, and who are called by the collective name of his CHURCH.*

(2.) What was the "destruction?"

Not temporal death: for God never ordained this punishment for the sin of unbelief on his son.

Not an exclusion from the communion of the Jewish nation; for unbelief in Christ was to them a recommendation instead of a disparagement; and to be severed from them entirely, was at least as likely to prove a blessing as a curse.

In what, then, did the destruction consist? Un-

* This passage furnishes an irrefragable proof of the unity and perpetuity of the *Visible Church*.

For, 1. These rebels were a *part* of the people from among whom they were to be destroyed: which people we have proved, could be no other than the people or church of God.

2. The people or church from which they were to be destroyed, was to remain a people, and the peculiar object of the divine regard. This is true of no people but that which composes his church. The Christian chuch is therefore the *very same* church from which the Jews were cast out.

3. The term "people" cannot designate the church otherwise than as a *great* WHOLE. The more we "search the scriptures," the more does a "cloud of witnesses" thicken round us to testify that "the Church of God is ONE."

doubtedly, in having their name and place exterminated from among the people of God; in being cast out of his church, and exposed to that perdition which shall be the fate of all whom he disowns. This must be the interpretation of the threatening, because no other will comport with either sense or fact.

Let us now see how this bears upon the point before us.

The unbelieving Jews were cut off, for their unbelief, from the church of God; and, surely, it will not be accounted the least part of the vengeance, that their children shared their fate.

But the case of believing Jews was exactly the reverse. If they who would not hear the divine prophet were to be destroyed from among the people; it certainly follows, that they who would and did hear him, should not be destroyed; but should retain their place and privileges. And if, in the execution of the curse upon the disobedient, their children also were cut off; then, God's own act establishing the principle of judgment, the children of those who were not disobedient, participated in their blessing; i. e. instead of being destroyed from among the people, were numbered with them; or, which is the same, were, by his own authority, reckoned members of his church.

These infants, then, being in the church of God

already, the question is, by what authority were they cast out? It would be an unheard of thing if the faith of their parents in the "consolation of Israel," should expel them. A singular way, indeed, of converting a Jew, to tell him that the very fact of his being a believer in Christ would excommunicate his children! The issue is short. Either the children of believing Jews were members of the church under her Christian form, or not. If not, then, in so far as their children were concerned, God inflicted upon the *faith* of parents, that very curse which he had threatened upon their *unbelief*. If otherwise, then at the very beginning of the new dispensation, infants were members of his church. We give our opponents, their option.

We have yet to answer a

Third Inquiry, concerning the excision of infants from the New Testament church: or, if you prefer it, their non-admission to her privileges.

How must such a measure have operated upon the feelings of a believing Jew?

Tenacious, in a high degree, of their peculiarities—regarding their relation to Abraham as momentous to their individual happiness; and as the most prominent feature of their national glory—knowing, too, that their children were comprised with themselves in the covenant of God, it is not possible that the Hebrews could have sub-

mitted, without reluctance, to a constitution which was to strip them of their favourite privilege; to dissever their tenderest ties; to blot the names of their little ones out of the register of God's people; and treat them afterwards, from generation to generation, as the little ones of the heathen man and the publican! On every other prerogative, real or imaginary, their suspicion was awake, their zeal inflammable, their passions intractable. But toward this, their grand prerogative, they evinced a tameness which required them to forget, at once, that they were men and that they were Jews. Search the records of the New Testament from one end to the other, and you will not find the trace of a remonstrance, an objection, or a difficulty on this subject, from the mouth of either a believing or an unbelieving Israelite! The former never parted with a tittle of even the Mosaic law, till the will of God was so clearly demonstrated as to remove every doubt: the latter lay constantly in wait for matter of accusation against the Christians. Nothing could have prompted him to louder clamour, to fiercer resistance, or to heavier charges, than an attempt to overturn a fundamental principle of the covenant with Abraham: nothing could have more startled and distressed the meek and modest disciple. Yet that attempt is made; that fundamental principle of the covenant with Abraham, is overturn-

ed; and not a friend complains, nor a foe resents! What miracle of enchantment has so instantaneously relieved the conscience of the one, and calmed the warmth of the other? Where is that wayward vanity, that captious criticism, that combustible temperament, that insidious, implacable, restless enmity, which by night and by day, in country and in town, haunted the steps of the apostles, and treasured up actions, words, looks, for the hour of convenient vengeance? All gone; dissipated in a moment! The proud and persecuting Pharisee rages at the name of Jesus Christ; fights for his traditions and his phylacteries; and utters not a syllable of dissent from a step which completely annihilates the covenant with Abraham! that very covenant from which he professes to derive his whole importance!! We can believe a great deal, but not quite so much as this.

Should it be alleged, that the Jews did probably oppose the exclusion of their infants from the New Testament church, although the sacred writers have omitted to mention it: we reply,

That although many things have happened which were never recorded; and, therefore, that the mere silence of an historian, is not, in itself, conclusive against their existence; yet no man may assume, as proof, the existence of a fact which is unsupported by either history or tradi-

tion. On this ground, the plea which we have stopped to notice is perfectly nugatory.

In the present case, however, the probabilities look all the other way. We mean, that if the Jews had made the opposition, which on the supposition we are combatting, it is inconceivable they should not have made, it would have been so interwoven with the origin, constitution, progress, and transactions of the primitive church, as to have rendered an omission of it almost impossible.

The question about circumcision and the obligation on the Gentile converts to keep the law of Moses, shook the churches to their centre; and was not put at rest but by a formal decision of the apostles and elders. Now as circumcision was the seal of the Abrahamic covenant, which explicitly constituted infants members of the church, is it to be imagined that so hot a controversy should have been kindled about the ensealing rite, and none at all about the privilege sealed? or that a record should have been carefully preserved of the disputes and decision concerning the *sign;* and no record at all kept of the discussions concerning the *thing signified*, which imparted to the former all their interest and value?

It is, therefore, utterly incredible that the resistance of Jews to the Christian arrangement for shutting out their children from the church of God,

should have passed unnoticed. But no notice of any such resistance is in the New Testament. The conclusion is, that no such resistance was ever offered: and the conclusion from this again is, that no cause for it existed; that is, that the infants of professing parents were considered as holding, under the new economy, the same place and relation which they held under the old.

Our conclusion acquires much force from the nature of the controversy respecting circumcision. The Judaizing teachers made the observance of this rite, a term, not only of communion, but of salvation. *Except ye be circumcised*, said they, *and keep the law of Moses, ye cannot be saved.* Had their doctrine prevailed, circumcision in the Christian church must have been regulated by the Mosaic law. But this law prescribed the circumcision of infants. Now, under what pretext could they urge a compliance with this ordinance, according to the law of Moses, upon the Gentile converts, unless it were *an undisputed point* that the children of these converts were members of the Christian church? An exception was at hand. "Whatever may be the duty of *adults*, there is no reason to circumcise *infants*; because, by the new order of things, they do not belong to the Christian community, and have no concern with its sealing ordinances." Yet no such exception was ever taken.

This one fact, under all its circumstances and connexions,* is equivalent to a doctrinal declaration of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, that the change of dispensation has not affected the rights of infants born of believing parents; and that they are under the Christian, as really as they were under the Mosaic, economy, members of the church of God; and as fully entitled to its initiating ordinance.

5. The *language* of God's word, respecting children, is in perfect accordance with the principle of their being members of his church; but is irreconcileable with the contrary supposition.

Enumerating some of the benefits of the new economy, he says, by the prophet Isaiah, that his people "shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for "trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their *offspring with them.*"† The Redeemer, in the days of his flesh, was much displeased with an attempt of his disciples to keep back infants from approaching him, and said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for *of such is the kingdon of God.*"‡ An expression which, we well know, signifies the New Testament church. "The promise," said Peter, after the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, "The promise is to you, and to *your children.*"§

* Compare Acts xxi. 21.

† Is. lxv. 23.

‡ Mark x. 14.

§ Acts ii. 39.

These and similar expressions, with which the word of God abounds, correspond much better to that system which associates children with their parents in his church, than with that which rejects them as no part of it. And we must have very strong reasons to justify our embracing a system which requires a language contrary to the genius of the language which the Holy Spirit himself has selected.

6. Unless we greatly mistake, the apostle Paul has twice decided the question before us in the most unequivocal manner; and decided it in our favour.

One of his decisions is in the following words: "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife; and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; *else were your children* UNCLEAN, *but now are they* HOLY."*

In what sense does a believing, sanctify an unbelieving, parent, so that their *children* are holy? Wherein does this holiness consist? Some have been so galled by this assertion of the apostle, that they have tried to fritter it down into a grave declaration of the legitimacy of children born of parents thus situated. As if faith in Christ were necessary to the validity of espousals! As if all the marriages of the heathen were mere concubi-

* 1 Cor. vii. 14.

nage; and all their children the fruit of illicit amours!

The apostle certainly does not mean that one parent communicates to another, or that either of them communicates to their children, that internal conformity to the divine purity, which is commonly called "holiness" or santification. This is contrary to reason, to scripture, and to daily experience. Yet he says that a believing parent renders holy the unbelieving one; and that, in consequence, their children are holy. What does he mean?

"Holy," as a term of established use and signification, was well understood by the Corinthian Christians. It expresses the state of a person or thing specially separated to the service of God; and in which, by reason of that separation, he acquires a peculiar property. For this interpretation we have his own authority—when prohibiting various pollutions, he thus addresses the people of Israel; *Ye shall be* HOLY *unto me: for I the Lord am holy; and* HAVE SEVERED *you from other people, that ye should be* MINE. Lev. xx. 26. This "severing" was effected by his covenant with them. They were "holy," because they belonged to his church, which he had erected to put his name and his glory there.

"Unclean," as contrasted with "holy," expresses the state of a person not separated to the ser-

vice of God: in whom he has no peculiar interest, and who is, therefore, "common;" i. e. *unappropriated to God.* All who are conversant with the scriptural phraseology know this representation to be true.

What, then, does the apostle say? He says that if the unbelieving, were *not* sanctified by the believing, parent, their children would be "unclean;" would be "common;" would have no peculiar relation to God, nor any place in his church. But since the believing, *does* sanctify the unbelieving, parent, their children are the reverse of "unclean:" they are "holy;" they are born under peculiar relations to God; they are appropriated to him; they are members of his church; and as they undoubtedly have a right to the token of their membership—to baptism.

Considering the nature of the scriptural style; and that "holy," and "unclean," or "common," are the precise terms for such as were, and as were not, respectively, within the external covenant of God, we are unable to conceive how the apostle could more formally and unequivocally have declared the church membership of infants born of a believing parent. The first of these terms was, in his mouth, exactly what "a member of the church" is in ours; and could not be otherwise understood by the primitive Christians.

The only plausible difficulty which lies against our view, is, that "According to the same reasoning, an unbeliever, *continuing in unbelief*, becomes a member of the church in consequence of marriage with a believer. For the apostle does not more positively affirm that the children are "holy," than he affirms that the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife sanctified, or "made holy," by the husband. Therefore, if holiness imparted by the parent to the children, makes them members of the church, the holiness imparted by one parent to the other, makes him or her, a member of the church. This will not be maintained. For it would be absurd to imagine, that an infidel adult, living in open hostility to the church of God, should be reckoned among its members merely in virtue of union to a believing husband or wife. Well then, if the "sanctification," which an unbelieving wife derives from her believing husband, does not make *her* a member of the church, the "holiness" which children derive from a believing parent, cannot make *them* members of the church."

The objection is shrewd: but, like many other shrewd things, more calculated to embarrass an inquirer, than to assist him. Our answer is short.

First, It makes the apostle talk nonsense. The amount of it when stripped of its speciousness

and tried by the standard of common sense, being neither more nor less than this, that all his discourse about the sanctification of husband and wife, and the holiness of their children, means—just *nothing at all.* For if it be not an internal holiness, which we do not affirm; nor an external relative holiness, which the objection denies; then a person is said by the apostle to be holy, whose holiness is neither within him nor without him; neither in soul, nor spirit, nor body, nor state, nor condition, nor any thing else: which, in our apprehension, is as genuine nonsense as can well be uttered. If those who differ from us feel themselves wronged, we beg them to show *in what the holiness mentioned by the apostle consists.*

Secondly. The objection takes for granted, that the sanctification of the husband by his wife, or of the wife by her husband, is precisely of the same *extent*, and produces on its subject the same *effect*, as the holiness which children inherit from a believing parent. This is certainly erroneous.

(1.) The covenant of God never founded the privilege of membership in his church upon the mere fact of *intermarriage* with his people: but it did expressly found that privilege upon the fact of being *born* of them.

(2.) By a positive precept, adults were not to be admitted into the church without a profession of their faith. This is a special statute, limiting,

in the case of adults, the general doctrine of membership. Consequently, the doctrine of Paul must be explained by the restriction of that statute. "Sanctify" her unbelieving husband the believing wife does; and so does the believing husband his unbelieving wife; i. e. to a *certain length;* but not *so far* as to render the partner thus sanctified, a member of the church—The former cannot be doubted, for the apostle peremptorily asserts it—The latter cannot be admitted; for it would contravene the statute already quoted. The membership of infants does not contravene it. And, therefore, although the holiness which the apostle ascribes to infants involves *their* membership; it does not follow that the sanctifying influence over an unbelieving husband or wife, which he ascribes to the believing wife or husband, involves the church membership of the party thus sanctified.

(3.) The very words of the text lead to the same conclusion. They teach us, in the plainest manner, that this sanctification regards the unbelieving parent not *for his own sake*, but as a *medium* affecting the transmission of covenant privilege to the *children of a believer.*

A simple, and we think, satisfactory account of the matter, is this:

Among the early conversions to Christianity, it often happened, that the gospel was believed by a

woman, and rejected by her husband; or believed by a man, and rejected by his wife. One of the invariable effects of Christianity being a tender concern in parents for the welfare of their offspring; a question was naturally suggested by such a disparity of religious condition, as to the light in which the children were to be viewed. Considering the one parent, they were to be accounted "holy;" but considering the other, they were to be accounted "unclean." Did the character of the former place them *within* the church of God; or the character of the latter *without* it? or did they belong partly to the church and partly to the world, but wholly to neither? The difficulty was a real one; and calculated to excite much distress in the minds of parents who, like the primitive Christians, did not treat the relation of their little ones to the church of God, as a slight and uninteresting affair.

Paul obviates it by telling his Corinthian friends, that in this case where the argument *for* the children appears to be perfectly balanced by the argument *against* them, God has graciously inclined the scale in *favour* of his people: so that *for the purpose of conveying to their infants the privilege of being within his covenant and church*, the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife by the husband. If it were not so, it must be the reverse; because it is impossible that

a child should be born in *two* contrary moral states : *then*, the believing husband being rendered " unclean" by his wife ; and the believing wife " unclean" by her husband, their children would also be " unclean," i. e. would be born, not in a state of separation *to* God ; but in a state of separation *from* him ; like those who are without the bond of his covenant, and, not being *appropriated* to him, are " common" or " unclean." But now, saith the apostle, God has determined that the parental influence shall go the other way. That instead of the interest which a child has in his covenant, by virtue of the faith of one parent, being made void by the infidelity of the other ; the very fact of being married to a believer, shall so far *control* the effect of unbelief—shall so far *consecrate* the infidel party, as that the children of such a marriage shall be accounted of the covenanted seed ; shall be members of the church—*Now*, saith Paul, *they are* HOLY.

The passage which we have explained, establishes the church membership of infants in another form. For it assumes the principle that when *both* parents are reputed believers, their children belong to the church of God as *a matter of course.* The whole difficulty proposed by the Corinthians to Paul grows out of this principle. Had he taught, or they understood, that *no* children, be their parents believers or unbelievers, are to be

accounted members of the church, the difficulty could not have existed. For if the faith of *both* parents could not confer upon a child the privilege of membership, the faith of only *one* of them certainly could not. The point was decided. It would have been mere impertinence to teaze the apostle with queries which carried their own answer along with them. But on the supposition that when both parents were members, their children, also, were members; the difficulty is very natural and serious. "I see," would a Corinthian convert exclaim, "I see the children of my Christian neighbours, owned as members of the church of God; and I see the children of others, who are unbelievers, rejected with themselves. I believe in Christ myself; but my husband, my wife, believes not. "What is to become of *my* children? Are they to be admitted with myself? or are they to be cast off with my partner?"

"Let not your heart be troubled," replies the apostle: "God reckons them to the believing, not to the unbelieving, parent. It is enough that they are *yours.* The infidelity of your partner shall never frustrate their interest in the covenant of your God. They are 'holy' because you are so."

This decision put the subject at rest. And it lets us know that one of the reasons, if not the chief reason of the doubt, whether a married person should continue, after conversion, in the con-

jugal society of an infidel partner, arose from a fear lest such continuance should exclude the children from the church of God. Otherwise it is hard to comprehend why the apostle should dissuade them from separating, by such an argument as he has employed in the text. And it is utterly inconceivable how such a doubt could have entered their minds, had not the membership of infants, born of believing parents, been undisputed, and esteemed a high privilege; *so* high a privilege, as that the apprehension of losing it made conscientious parents at a stand whether they ought not rather to break the ties of wedlock, by withdrawing from an unbelieving husband or wife. Thus, the *origin* of this difficulty on the one hand, and the *solution* of it, on the other, concur in establishing our doctrine, that, by the appointment of God himself, the *infants of believing parents are* BORN *members of his church.*

We shall close this number, already too long, though but an outline, with another decision on the same general question, from the pen of the same apostle.

Treating of the future restoration of the Jews, he says, *They also, if they bide not still in unbelief, shall be* GRAFFED *in; for God is able to graff them in* AGAIN. *For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature; and wert graffed, contrary to nature, into a good olive tree; how much more shall*

these, which be the natural branches, *be graffed into their* OWN OLIVE TREE. Rom. xi. 23, 24.

That the olive tree signifies, and *can* signify nothing else than the *visible church* with the privileges dispensed in it, we abundantly proved in our second number.* The Jews never did belong, *nationally*, to any but the external church; and from no other could they be cut off. But, saith Paul, these Jews, "the natural branches," have been "broken off," and thou the Gentile, "graffed in." Graffed into what? The *same* tree from which the others were cut away. Then, not only is there a *visible church;* but it is the *very same* from which the Jews have been excommunicated. Or else the apostle has asserted a falsehood. For if the New Testament church be not the same, in substance, with the church to which the Jews belonged, it is not true that the Gentiles have been "graffed into the olive tree," from which the Jews have been broken off; but a *new tree* has been planted: a flat and formal contradiction to the word of God! which says, that the *old tree stands*, and that other *branches* are graffed in. Well, then, the Gentiles occupy in the church the place which the Jews did before their expulsion. The new branch with *its buds* is transferred to the good olive tree, and grows in its fatness. Whatever privileges, therefore, the Jews had formerly,

* 45—47.

as *members of the church of God*, all these, at least, their Gentile successors enjoy. But the membership of their infants was one of these privileges; a principle one. Therefore, the children of Gentile believers are members of the Christian church.

Turn, now, the argument. The Jews are to be restored. These, the "natural branches," shall be "graffed in again"—shall be "graffed into their *own olive tree.*" AGAIN! Into their OWN olive tree! Then *their own* tree is preserved. But mark, the Gentile branches are not to be cut off. So then, the Jews and Gentiles will belong to *one* church; will be branches of the *same* olive tree. But they are to be graffed into their *own* tree, says Paul. The consequence returns irresistibly upon us. The church of God under both dispensations is *one and the same.* Or else the apostle has told another falsehood. For if it be not the same, as the Jews are to come into the Christian church, they will not be graffed into their *own* olive tree, but into another.

But the Jews, before their excision, were with *their children*, members of the church. If, then, they be *reinstated;* or as the apostle expresses it, graffed in *again*, their children also must be members of the church, or else God will break his promise, and the Holy Spirit of truth, deceive their hope. The restored Jews, however, can derive their privileges only through the medium of the

New Testament church. The membership of their infants is one of the privileges to be so derived; therefore, the *infants of believing parents are members of the New Testament church.*—Which was to be demonstrated.

CHURCH OF GOD.

No. VI.

Uses.

Believing that the preceding numbers contain a true and scriptural account of the visible church in general, we think it proper, before inquiring into its particular provisions, to point out some of the ends which it is calculated to answer, and some of the consequences which result from our doctrine.

Let us briefly recapitulate.

Adults who make a credible profession of their faith, are to be admitted as members.*

Children of believing parents, that is, of visible Christians, are members in virtue of their birth.† So that the Catholic church consists of all them who, throughout the world, profess the true religion; and of their children.

This great community, which is but one, has

* What a credible profession is, see No. III. p. 48—58.

† For the proof of this, see our last No. p. 85—121.

special external covenant relations to the Most High God; the fundamental principle of which is, a dispensation of grace through a Redeemer; and, as an effect of these relations, enjoys special privileges in which her members have a right to participate according to their circumstances.

From the very nature of the case, it must and does happen, that many of these members are Christians only in name: such as never have been, and never shall be, vitally united to Christ, but shall die in their iniquity. Yet if their unsoundness be not detected; if by no outward act they reproach that worthy name by which they are called, their right, even to sacramental privilege, is as firm and full as the right of a believer who shall hold the highest place among the saved. The reason, which has been illustrated already, is, that Christian ordinances are administered by men; and the secret state of the soul before God is not, and cannot be, their rule of judgment. In this case, appearances and realities are, to them, the same; because they have no means of forming an opinion of realities but from appearances: and, therefore, officers in the house of God may, with the most perfect good conscience and fidelity, give the seals of his covenant to such as shall turn out to be sons and daughters of perdition. If it were not so, not one among all the ministers of the gospel since the

ascension of our Lord Jesus, could escape being arraigned for treason at his bar. For not one of them would dare to affirm, that he had not, in a single instance, given the sacramental sign to an unbeliever.

Seeing, then, that false professors and true; the sincere and the hypocritical; elected men and reprobates, are mingled together in the external church; and that there are no human means of separating the "chaff which shall be burnt up with unquenchable fire," from the "wheat which shall be gathered into the garner" of God, what purpose does such a constitution serve? Does not the idea that such a strange commixture should be a church of God shock the mind? Is it not unfriendly to piety? And would it not be much better if saints alone were to be admitted within her pale, to the utter and absolute exclusion of hypocrites and reprobates?

Doubtless many think so. For men are apt to conceit that they can mend the works of God. And such multitudes of expriments have been made, in this way, upon his church, that if he had not been her keeper she would have perished ages ago. When he shall employ us to set up a church, it will be soon enough to display our skill, In the mean time, let us thankfully submit to his appointments; and humbly inquire whether we cannot discover in that very constitution which

has been described, something not unworthy of his wisdom and his goodness too.

There is a strong analogy between the kingdom of heaven in the *heart*, in the *world*, and in the *church*. Not one of them is free from evil: nor is designed to be so in the present state. The *world* teems with sin; it is full of plagues and curses: but it is still *God's* world; the subject of his government, and the theatre of his grace. The renewed heart is infested with depravity. Sin dwells in them who bear most of their Saviour's image, enjoy the largest share of his communion, and approach the nearest to his perfection. *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.** But this "sin that dwelleth in them," does not hinder them from being in soul and body, *the temples of the Holy Ghost.*† It would be quite as reasonable to maintain, that a Christian cannot be a child of God because there *is a law in his members warring against the law of his mind*:‡ or that the world is not God's world because *the tumult of those that rise up against him increaseth continually*;‖ as to maintain that a church composed partly of converts and partly of the unconverted, is not for that reason, a true nor a scriptural church. The neighbourhood and conflict of good and evil in this life is

* 1 John i. 8.
† 1 Cor. vi. 19.
‡ Rom. vii. 23.
‖ Ps. lxxiv. 23.

one of those depths which nothing but folly attempts to fathom; yet while the mystery is unsearchable, the doctrine is clear, and the fact notorious. Whoever, then, shall deny that God has so constituted his church here as to include concealed enemies in the midst of real friends; and has left no method of drawing, with certainty, the line of practical discrimination; must go further, and deny that he has so constituted his world as to admit the introduction of sin, and has left no method of expelling it: or has so constituted the plan of salvation, as to allow corrupt affections to reside in the hallowed breast, and has left no method of extirpating them. The objection is precisely the same in the three cases. He who can answer it in one, can answer it in all; and he who cannot answer it in all, can answer it in none.

On the other hand, whoever can find it consistent with the divine perfection, that wicked men should be in the world; and wicked propensities in the soul of a believer, and yet the world be acknowledged by God as his world, and the believer as his child; will find it equally consistent with his perfection that servants of sin as well as servants of righteousness should belong to the church, and yet she be owned of him as his church.

Nor will this reasoning operate, in the smallest degree, against her sacredness as holy to the Lord; nor impair our obligation to promote her

purity; nor afford the slightest countenance to careless admission into her communion, or the relaxation of her discipline toward the scandalous. For although God will glorify himself by bringing good out of evil, it is damnable in *us* to "do evil that good may come."* And although he, in that sovereignty which "giveth no account of any of his matters," has permitted and overrules the sin of the creature for purposes worthy of himself; yet we are not seated in the throne of sovereignty; we are under law; and the law of our duty is plain, so that "he may run who readeth," that we are to *resist, even unto blood, striving against sin.*† It no more follows that his church is not to thrust from her embrace the known servants of sin, because her vigilance may be eluded and her efforts defeated; than it follows that believers may indulge themselves in the commission of sin, because all their exertions will be insufficient to destroy it while they are in the body; or than it follows, that crimes are to stalk unquestioned through the earth, because they cannot be entirely cut off. The more closely this analogy is pressed, the more exactly will it be found to hold. And hence arises the general reason why the church of God, according to our principles, is well and wisely constituted—It is precisely adapt-

* Rom. iii. 8. † Heb. xii. 8.

ed to the state of our world, and to the course of his own dispensations.

The analogy which we have now pointed out might convince the intelligent Christian, and silence the modest one. To the former it offers a decisive character of truth; and the latter will ask no better argument for the goodness of a constitution, than it is a constitution of God. But we need not rest the matter here. Without prying into the reservations of his wisdom, we may perceive some valuable ends to be answered by the mixed state of his church.

1. It reduces the quantity of actual sin.

We cannot too deeply deplore the fact that many "have a name to live and are dead." They are numbered with the people of God. Their reputation among their fellow professors is pure. Yet they have not "passed from death unto life." A terrible condition, no doubt; and a preparation for a terrible doom. But let us consider what would be the effect if all those sins should be disclosed in this world which shall be disclosed when the "secrets of all hearts shall be made manifest." Or, if this be too strong; what would be the effect, should those corruptions which are not subdued by divine grace, be set free from the restraints supplied through the external church. Could you unmask the hypocrite, and throw him at once out of your fellowship, and confidence, all

the motives and influence which serve to curb his lusts, and limit their mischief, would cease to operate; and that fountain of iniquity which is now shut up in darkness would break out into open day, and pour its poisonous streams in every direction. It is impossible to conjecture how far the law of God's house, and liberal intercourse with his people, frustrate the worst designs of hell by *shackling* the depravity of its servants. Some, perhaps, may contend that it were better to see every bad man in his own colours, that we might completely "purge out the old leaven." Their zeal is not according to knowledge—They inadvertently reproach the wisdom of God, who does not permit such a discovery to be made. And what would they have? Would it be better that an enemy to God should give scope to his enmity, and spread infection and death all around him, than that the repression of it should tie up his hands, and render him comparatively harmless? Would it be better that he should blaspheme the name of God, than that he should treat it with external reverence? Better, to set before his children or companions an example of hideous profligacy, than an example of decorum! to teach them to swear, steal, lie, profane the sabbath, deride their bible, mock the ordinances of religion, than to inculcate upon them lessons of truth, of probity, of respect to the name, the day, the

word, and the worship of God! Go a step further, and say that it would be better to lay aside all the control of civil government, and let loose the myriads of rogues and traitors whom the community unwittingly cherishes in her bosom, than to keep them under the salutary awe of the tribunals of Justice, of the dungeon and the halter.

Besides, men who only profess religion, while they are strangers to its power, have much more extensive connexions with those who profess none, than real Christians can or ought to have. There is not that mutual repugnance which renders society reserved and suspicious; and thus they become a medium of transmitting the *moral* influence of the gospel to thousands and tens of thousands who yield no intentional obedience to its authority. Real Christians act directly upon professed ones; and these, again, upon men who make no profession at all; and thus, through an infinite number of channels unnoticed and unknown, Christianity streams its influence over human Society; gives a tone to public opinion, and a purity to public and individual manners, which are derivable from no other source. The very infidel is by this means instructed in all the truth he knows. He has an impulse given to his faculties; a check to his passions; and a rein to his actions, of which he is unconscious. But if you could turn out of the church all who are not heirs

according to the promise of eternal life, you would, in a great measure, defeat the benign influence of the gospel upon the civil community; because you would destroy many points of their contract, and remove thousands altogether from its sphere of action; or, which is the same thing, contract the sphere so as to leave out thousands who are now within it. Admitting, then, without scruple, the just cause of grief which is afforded by the Canaanite's being in the house of the Lord, we are consoled with observing how he brings good out of evil. Satan thrusts himself and his accomplices into the assembly of the saints; and God converts the intrusion into a chain for them both. Thus the visible church, composed of believers and hypocrites, effects, by this very principle, an incalculable diminution of the actual sin which would otherwise be in the world.

2. It diminishes the misery of human life.

This is a direct consequence of prevented sin. For in proportion as the laws of God are violated, is the aggregate suffering of the community increased: and in proportion as they are respected, is its character amiable, and its condition prosperous. Who can doubt, even for a moment, that the abandonment of all nominal Christians to the unsanctified propensities of their nature, would multiply crimes and accelerate individual and public ruin? And who can doubt, that the check im-

posed on these propensities by an outward profession of the cross of Christ, averts calamity which would otherwise be both certain and severe? Let us not overlook the immense difference between temporal and eternal good; and between the means by which they are respectively procured. The religion which will not save a soul from hell, may yet save a nation from destruction. It is only upon gross transgression, freely and obstinately committed, that God inflicts those evils which he calls "his judgments." There may be much secret impiety; much smothered opposition to his government, but it must break out; must become flagrant; must resist the milder correctives, before he "arise to shake terribly the earth." It is for no small provocation that he "bathes his sword in heaven;" nor is it easy for a people to "fill their cup." He may visit; he may chastise; always, however, for open sin. But the cry for vengeance must be loud and long before he resign a land to desolation, and mark it so irreversibly for his curse, that *though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in it, they should deliver neither son nor daughter;* but merely *their own souls by their righteousness;** and *though Moses and Samuel stood before him, his mind could not be toward it.*† We are not unaccustomed to the clamour which some, *who know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm,*

* Ezek. xiv. † Jerem. xv.

and yet *desire to be teachers of the law*, raise against this doctrine, as calculated to feed the pride of self-righteousness; to spread Arminianism; to disparage the grace and merit of Christ; and other things of the same sort. But there is a pride which needs mortification as much as any other, although it escapes their notice; and that is, the pride of conceited ignorance. Little as we incline to flatter vanity, we shall not attack it upon principles which would prostrate along with it the righteousness of God, and cover the pages of his blessed word with contradictions and lies. We hold it to be a maxim almost self-evident, that abounding and impudent wickedness will bring more wrath, and therefore more misery, upon a land, than wickedness shut up in the bosom, or driven, by the commanding aspect of truth, into secret corners. If our citizens, who are perpetually praising Christianity, and perpetually insulting it, were to yield a *decent* deference to its authority—if our magistrates, instead of sacrificing their allegiance to God, whose ministers they are,* on the altar of a wretched and fickle popularity, were to become a more steady and uniform "terrour to evil doers," the storm which blackens over our trembling country would be dissipated; and the smiling skies invite every man to resume his seat "under his vine and under his fig-tree."

* Rom. xiii.

The preventing of sin, then, being a prevention of misery, the world owes much of its freedom from misery to the influence of the visible church, *constituted as it is*, in restraining sin—more, much more, than it would owe to such a constitution as would exclude all nominal Christians; the number of them who are reconciled to God by the death of his son, remaining the same. We say the number of unconverted remaining the same. For it cannot be doubted, that as two real Christians are better and more useful than one *real* and one *apparent* Christian; so the two latter are much better and more useful than one real Christian, and one openly wicked man. And as, for the same reason, it would be infinitely more desirable, that the whole world should be in the church, and the whole church converted, than that there should be a mixture of clean and unclean in her communion; so it is infinitely more desirable, and more conducive to peace and happiness, that while this purity is unattainable, the appearance of godliness in those who have none, should encourage the hearts and strengthen the hands of those who have it; and thus hypocrisy concur with sincerity in causing "iniquity, as ashamed, to hide her head."

There is another view of this point which comes home to the heart. To that question. "Why must believers die?" The following an-

swer among others, has been returned. If believers were exempted from the common mortality; if, like Enoch and Elijah, they should go to heaven without "putting off their tabernacle," then Death would reveal the secrets of the eternal world It would be known by the very manner of his departing hence, whether an individual was saved or lost. What anguish, what horrour, what distraction, would fill the souls and the families of God's dear children; to be assured, by the simple fact of a friend or kinsman's dying, that he was gone to hell! But would not the very same effect be produced, were all unbelievers shut out of the church? The mere circumstance of their exclusion would prove their unbelief; and their death in unbelief, would prove that they had perished. The tender mercies of God relieve his people from an intolerable load of suffering, by subjecting them, in common with others, to the decree of death. And that constitution of his visible church, which, by admitting members upon external evidence, admits hypocrites as well as the sincere, is a necessary counterpart to the law of death. Visible departure from the world, whether into his church or into eternity, lies through an entrance which God has so constructed, that any farther than a judgment may be formed from external evidence, he alone "knoweth them that are his." Both are provisions of

one gracious system. They, therefore, who would so model the Christian church as to keep or to expel from her communion, all ungodly men who do not show themselves to be such by their ungodly principles or deeds, are labouring to defeat the mercy displayed in the death of a believer, and to wring his heart with agony during the whole period of his life. Eternal thanks to the divine compassions! They cannot succeed. The counsel of the Lord is against them; and "the counsel of the Lord, *that* shall stand."

3. The mixed character of the church contributes directly to her prosperity. It does so,

By extending her resources:

By increasing her numbers:

By affording protection.

First, The resources of the church, we mean her outward resources, are extended by her present constitution. These, in general, are *pecuniary* aid, and the aid of *talents*.

It is evident, that *all* those means by which the gospel is supported and propagated, are not furnished by real Christians; and equally evident that the whole supply is very scanty. If you should deduct the part which comes from the pockets of unconverted men, the balance would not preserve Christianity from being starved out of the world. Indeed, from the wretched provision which is commonly made for her maintenance, one might

conclude, with little offence against charity, that the great majority of professed Christians, are not unwilling to try how far this experiment of *starving* may prove successful. That is their sin, and it shall be their punishment. Let them think of it in those moments when they recollect that they are as accountable for the use of their property, as for the use of their liberty: and that there is to be a day of reckoning, in which no robbers shall appear to less advantage, or be treated with less indulgence, than those, who in this life, have "robbed God."*

But small as the encouragement is for any, who by following another honest calling, can procure a tolerable livelihood, and lay up even a little for their families, to devote themselves to the religious welfare of society, it would be much smaller were none to be accounted Christians here, who shall not be accounted such hereafter. Go, with the power of detecting hypocrisy; cast out of the church, all whose fellowship is not "with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ." And your next step must be to nail up the doors of our places of worship. We are in the habit of praying that the Lord, who has declared that "the silver is his, and the gold is his," would influence the hearts of the opulent to bring their offerings into his courts: We thank him, when,

* Mal. iii. 8, 9.

in a manner somewhat uncommon, he hears our prayers, and sends the bounty; and yet we overlook the daily occurrence of this very thing which is the object of our petitions and of our gratitude! He has incorporated the principle in the frame of his visible church, and it operates with regular, though silent, efficacy. But if all who appear to be Christians, and are not, were excluded, the effect must be to diminish, in a most distressing degree, the actual pecuniary resources of the church. For men who are marked as enemies, will never lend her the same aid as men who are supposed to be friends. And thus the absolute purification of the church upon earth, would overthrow the plan which the wisdom of God has devised, to cause his very foes to assess their own purses in carrying on that dispensation of grace which, at heart, they do not love; and which, if left to themselves, they would resist with all their might.

The same reason applies to *talent.*

Revelation is never more completely robed in light, than when she is brought fairly and fully to the bar of evidence. The attacks of infidels have furnished her friends with both opportunities and incitements to dispel the mist by which she has been occasionally or partially obscured; and she has gone forth "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

What is true of Christianity in general, is equally true of its peculiar doctrines. The more rigidly they are examined, the more worthy do they appear of God; the more perfectly adapted to the condition of man; the more consistent with each other, with the lights of pure philosophy, and the discoveries of real science.

But these results which have shed, and are shedding, their lustre upon the evangelical system, combine the researches of the ablest men in the most literary periods of the world. There is no department of human knowledge which God has not laid under tribute to his word. Linguists, mathematicians, astronomers, botanists, mineralogists; chymistry, physiology, and medicine; the antiquarian, the traveller, the natural, civil, and ecclesiastical historian; commerce, agriculture, mechanics, and the fine arts—are all to be found waiting at the temple of God, opening their treasures, and presenting their gifts. Whoever has the least acquaintance with things older than himself, and without the petty circle of his personal agency, knows that the mass of all valuable learning, since the introduction of Christianity, ever has been, and is yet, in the hands of professed Christians. They have employed it in her defence, to an extent and with an effect of which thousands, who are now reaping the benefits of their efforts, can have no possible conception.

Yet, certainly, among those who have thus fortified the citadel of truth, many were believers in name only, and never tasted the salvation to the influence of which they contributed. "How much better," you will exclaim, "had they loved the Redeemer not in name only, but in deed and in truth!" How much better indeed! But how much worse, we rejoin, had they sided with his open enemies, and levelled *against* his word, all that artillery which they employed *for* it. And that such would have been the consequence had none been admitted into his church, who were not partakers of his grace, is as evident, as that a cause, left to its own operation, will produce its proper effect. We are well apprised of the contempt which some men affect to heap upon human learning. And we are equally well apprised that in this their hostility their ignorance and vain glory have at least as large a share as their spirituality of mind. Nor are we regardless of the mischief which "unsanctified learning" has done in the church of God; and of the jealousy with which, on that account, many serious people look upon learned men. But why? Shall we never distinguish between *use* and *abuse?* Learning is good in itself. The evil lies not in its nature, but in its application. Because some have prostituted their learning to pervert the truth and institutions of our Lord Jesus

Christ, shall we not accept the aid of the same weapon, rightfully used, to vindicate them? Shall we commit them to the illiterate and the stupid, in expectation of miracles to elicit wisdom from the mouth of folly? and bribe letters and genius to enlist themselves in the service of the devil? The very same objection strikes at wealth, at strength; at every power, moral and physical, which God has seen fit to create. Because "unsanctified" opulence has spread corruption through Christian communities, is it desirable that all Christians be beggars? Because strong men, if they be of quarrelsome temper, may keep a whole neighbourhood under the terrours of assault and battery, would it therefore be desirable that all Christians should be pigmies? It is the nature of every thing to work harm when misdirected, in exact proportion to its power of working good when directed well. This is a law of God's own enacting: and is one of the means by which he makes sin to punish itself. Therefore, to reject a potent agency because its perversion will involve calamity proportioned to its vigour, is the very rectified spirit of absurdity. Carry your principle through; and tell your maker that he did a foolish thing in creating angels, because such of them as, by their fall, have become devils, can do infinitely more mischief than if they had been men! No—Let us put away these childish

things. If unconverted men get into the church under the cloak of a credible profession; if they remain there undetected; if they bring their wealth and their talent to the support of the Christian cause, let us accept the boon with all thankfulness. It is so much of the arm of iniquity palsied; nay, more, it is so much clear gain from the interests of hell to the comforter of the church of God. If the gospel is to be maintained, or a starving disciple to be fed, it will make no difference in the market whether the dollar was given by a hypocrite or a believer. And if the bible be happily illustrated; or its adversaries victoriously encountered, the truth is still the same, whether the talent which demonstrates it be connected with the spirit of faith or the heart of unbelief. The excess of these two benefits over and above what could be performed by Christians alone, is the advantage, in point of *resource*, which the church derives from her present constitution, over and above that which she would enjoy were none to enter into her communion but true converts.

The *second* way in which the mixed character of the visible church contributes directly to her prosperity, is by *increasing her numbers.*

The gospel is the great means of turning men *from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.* For this purpose it is necessary that they and it should meet. *How shall they call on*

*him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?** Whatever brings sinners within the reach of the means of salvation, and places them under the "joyful sound," puts them into the way in which alone they have a right to expect the pardoning and the renewing mercy of their God. Let it, then, be considered, how many members of the external church have remained for years in their habit of decent but unprofitable attendance upon the public worship of God, and have at last been arrested by his grace, and *made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.* "Their number," it may be objected, "is smaller than we suppose; and forms too inconsiderable a portion of the saved to have any weight in the argument."

We believe this, upon the whole, to be true. It was long ago observed, and the observation ought to sink down into the hearts of both the old and young professor, that where the gospel is enjoyed in its purity, it is the ordinary method of providence to call sinners into the fellowship of Jesus Christ in the *days of their youth.* Among those who have enjoyed from their childhood the benefit of religious instruction, of holy example, of sound and faithful ministrations, the instances of conversion after middle life, are, for the most part, ex-

* Rom. x. 14.

tremely rare. Let the aged Christian run over, in his mind, such of these instances as have come within his own knowledge, and we shall be much deceived if his list be not very short. Yet small as is their *relative* number, their amount, absolutely taken, is not contemptible. But had a power of judging the state of the soul before God, from other than external evidence, been the rule of admission into his church, who can doubt that the rejection of these members would have banished the most of them from his sanctuary altogether, and left them to perish in their iniquity. It is vain to reply that "*the Lord knoweth them that are his*, and will take care that none of them be lost." He *does* know them: he *will* take care that none of them be lost; but he will reveal his knowledge and exercise his care, by the intervention of means: and the admission of members into his church upon external evidence *only*, appears, from the nature of the thing, and is proved by the event, to be one of his means.

The operation, however, of this cause of her increase, is not confined to the persons of late converts: nor would our argument be much affected, were they still fewer, or were there none at all. Thousands, who *have the form of godliness without the power*, and who die as they live, *in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity*, are heads of families. By their authority and example, children,

apprentices, servants, who, otherwise, would rove unrestrained like *the wild asses colt*, are kept from much gross and open wickedness : they learn to respect the sabbath day; they come under Christian instruction ; they attend the institutions of public worship ; to multitudes of them God blesses his own ordinances for their eternal life. And thus, while the parent or the master dies in his sin, the child, the apprentice, or the servant, led by his own hand to the religious precept and the house of prayer, becomes an *heir of God, and a fellow heir with Christ in glory.* Nay, individuals without families, are often the unconscious instruments of salvation to others. No human being is so poor as not to have an acquaintance. We know it to be a principle in human nature, that men love to draw their friends into connexions with which they themselves are pleased. It is a necessary effect of man's social character; and is no where more regular and extensive than in his religious associations. Many causes beside, and without, conversion from sin to God, render men zealous in promoting the credit and prosperity of their respective churches. The prejudice of birth, the force of habit, the preference of judgment, attachment to a particular minister or circle of friends, engage much warm and active patronage to ecclesiastical bodies. One companion brings another ; that one a third ; and thus, by a most

complicated system of individual action and reaction, great multitudes are assembled in the house of God, who otherwise would never cross its threshold. Sometimes a person, induced by the persuasion of another to hear a certain preacher, or occupy a seat in a certain church, has been awakened to a sense of eternal things; has been "translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son;" and sealed up by the holy spirit of promise, unto the day of redemption," when his persuader has remained unmoved, or even thrown away his profession, and turned an open reprobate.

Withdraw, then, all the families of nominal Christians, and all their acquaintances whom they allure to the public ordinances—withdraw the acquaintances of single men and women, especially those in younger life, and after you have made the deduction, look at your places of worship! Whole rows of seats which were filled with persons of decent, respectful, and even serious deportment, are empty. The greater part of those from whom converts were to be drawn to replace dying believers, and perpetuate the knowledge of Jesus and the resurrection, is gone. The church has lost one of her chief holds upon the world: she has closed up a wide door of her own access to unbelievers; and has actually banished them, by hundreds, from the mercy-seat.

There is an exception to this reasoning too obvious and plausible to pass unnoticed.

"Facts appear to be against us. Who composed the audiences of the apostles? Who flocked to the sound of the evangelical trumpet, at the blessed reformation from popery? What is, at this day, the most successful method of crowding the churches, even with those who do not so much as profess to be religious? Is it not the plain and undisguised declaration of that very gospel which, it is said, the people will not hear without the help of hypocrites to bring them. If you want to empty a place of worship, court your Christians in name only; let nothing be done to shock their prejudices or alarm their pride. If you want to fill a place of worship, *know nothing* in your ministrations *but Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*"

A mistake is never so imposing as when it misapplies undoubted truths. We admit all the facts here stated, but cannot see how they invalidate our reasoning. Because they have occurred in the history of the church, so conducted as not to exclude the secret deceiver. Her character has always been mixed. The pretensions of some men to purify her in such a manner as to admit only genuine converts, are vanity and wind. They never did, they never can, it is impossible, in the nature of things, they ever should, act upon other than external evidence, if they act upon evidence

at all. Could a method be devised of distinguishing the *real* from the *apparent* Christian, not only would it cease to be the Lord's prerogative "to know them that are his;" but the whole complexion and character of his church would be altered. She would be *another church altogether from what he has made her.* And since he has adapted the tenour of his providence, and the influences of his grace, to her *actual constitution*, it is idle to imagine that the course of events which is connected with her *present* constitution, would attend her under a constitution *essentially different.* The church, framed as some good men would have her, not only never existed, but, for aught they can show, would be utterly unfit for this world of ours; and would utterly fail of accomplishing her ends. Nor can they assign any tolerable reason for a belief that of all the effects which *now* flow from the dispensation of the gospel, a *single one* would be produced upon a change of the system.

An advantage, therefore, and not a small one, of the mixed condition of the church is, that it collects within her pale, and introduces to her ordinances, multitudes who otherwise would remain "without," but, now, "shall be heirs of salvation."

A *third* benefit directly arising from the mixed condition of the church, is *protection.*

In times of affliction, the witnesses for truth are often more, and in the times of prosperity fewer,

than they are supposed to be. Could the line be accurately drawn between sound and unsound professors, the former would frequently find themselves in a very small minority. Such a disclosure would not only dispirit their minds and repress their exertions, but subject them to taunt, to insult, and to oppression. We must bear in remembrance that the "world which lieth in wickedness," never wants the inclination to persecute them who are "chosen out of it." The *computed* number of Christians serves to check that inclination; and it is often checked so effectually that its existence is denied; and Christians themselves are half persuaded, that the world is less hostile to them and their master than in the days of primitive peril. But could they be distinctively pointed out, this erring charity of theirs would get its rebuke in their ruin. The fire would feed upon their flesh, and scaffolds stream with their blood, at the instance, and by the agency, of many who now treat them with civility and respect. Set them up as a mark, by exposing their weakness, and nothing short of a perpetual miracle would hinder "the men of the earth" from exterminating them at a stroke, and, with them, the church of the living God.

But as the case stands, his overruling providence uses the nominal, for a shield to the real, Christian. Apparent believers occupy a middle

ground between the church of the redeemed and the world which knows not God. Belonging in pretence to the one, and in fact to the other, they interpose a medium between the two, which often prevents a destructive contact.

The malice of the persecutor sleeps, and his arm is idle, from the difficulty of selecting his victim and pointing his blow. Were he to strike at random, he would smite those whom he wishes to spare, and miss those whom he wishes to smite. Thus there is a secret, and silent, but real and effective, alliance between unconverted men in the church and out of it, which the controlling hand of God makes to subserve the safety and comfort of his own people.

Such are some of the ends, "holy, just, and good," which we, circumscribed as is our knowledge of the ways of God, can perceive to be accomplished by the mixed condition of his church. That there are no others most worthy of his wisdom, though infinitely above the reach of ours, nothing but inebriating folly will dare to pronounce. What ultimate relations his church may have to his universal kingdom, it were impertinent, if not profane, so much as to conjecture. Suffice it that while every step of our progress enjoins sobriety of thought; restrains the indiscretion of zeal; and rebukes the spirit of intrusive igno-

rance; enough is discovered to remove the modest scruple, and satisfy the reverential inquiry.

In a preceding part of this discussion, we contracted an engagement which we shall here fulfil.

To our doctrine which unequivocally admits that the visible church is so constituted as to contain a mixture of good men and bad, without any means of distinguishing, precisely, the one from the other; and which maintains that the infants of parents, or a parent, professing godliness, are, by the fact of their birth, members of the church, and intitled to the sacramental seal of their relation, it is objected, that "we debase and prostitute the sacraments; that we necessarily give the seal of spiritual blessings to multitudes who have not and never shall have, "any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God"—that by such an application we not only put a seal to a blank, which is mere mockery; but call upon the God of Truth to certify a lie, which is yet worse than mockery—that it is peculiarly absurd to administer to infants an ordinance coupled by the scriptures with faith in Christ, which infants are confessedly incapable of exercising."

This is specious, and well calculated to gain the popular ear. In reasoning, as in other things, it is commonly much easier to get into a difficulty than to get out of it. Objections to any fixed order are always at hand, because its operation

is always felt: but answers to those objections are not so ready, because the reasons of the order cease to be observed, as time is always removing them further from our knowledge. On this account it frequently requires more sense and search to refute one cavil, than to propose twenty. From the same cause minds which feel the force of the cavil, are, in thousands of instances, unable to comprehend the refutation, even though it be mathematically correct. Hence shrewd, but petty sophism, and warm but cloudy declamation, against the visible church, make a quick impression, and exert a lasting influence, upon the weak, the illiterate, and the vain; while the reply to them can hardly hope to succeed, except among those who are capable of thinking; and among whom their progress is small, their proselytes few, and their dominion tottering.

In the present case there appears to have been, and to be, a peculiar infatuation. It has been demonstrated over and over, that the common, which are the strongest, objections to the doctrine of a visible church catholic, in so far at least, as it embraces the administration of the sacraments, apply with equal force to the system of their advocates; to an appointment unquestionably divine; and to the scriptural declarations concerning eternal life.

1. To the system of their advocates.

For if the baptising of infants who possibly may not, and, in many instances, certainly do not, prove to be true Christians, is chargeable with nullity and mockery; then the baptising of adults who possibly may not, and, in many instances, certainly do not, prove to be true Christians, is equally a nullity and a mockery: And therefore, unless we can know who shall be the heirs of salvation, and restrict the sacraments accordingly, their administration must always be involved in the charge of nullity and mockery. The opponents of infant baptism are so pinched by this retortion of their argument, that they endeavour to disembarrass themselves by adopting the *reality* of Christian experience, that is, the *discovery* of a man's gracious state, as their principle of admission to sacramental privilege. The subterfuge will not avail them. They must found their discovery either on special revelation, or upon other evidence. To the former they cannot pretend; and the latter they must derive from one of two sources: either the fruits of grace in a man's life, which must be certified by others, and are *external evidence;* or the account which he himself gives of his own conversion. This to himself is *internal*, but the moment he mentions it to others, it becomes *testimony*, and like the former, it is *external* evidence.

Is, then, the judgment of his examiners liable to mistake? If not, how did they become infallible?

And, as the reality of a gracious state is the reason of their admitting a man into their communion, it must for ever remain a sufficient reason for retaining him: for those with whom we now contend, hold the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. How, then, can they ever justify the exclusion of any of their members? For as the possession of grace is the ground of his admission, nothing but the want of it can be a ground of his expulsion. Thus, in every case of excommunication, they stand self-convicted of having mistaken a man's character either when they took him in, or when they cast him out. From this alternative they have no escape but an acknowledgment that they were either faithless in the first instance, or tyrannical in the second. In so far, therefore, as they have ever had their communion, members, who, when "weighed in the balances, were found wanting," it is impossible not to perceive that they are in very same predicament with those whom they reproach as lax and carnal, that in the same proportion their own sacraments are nullities and mockeries; and that their blow at the advocates of the one visible church, recoils, with all its force, upon their own heads.

2. Their objections to our doctrine, are equally conclusive against an appointment unquestionably divine: we mean the ordinance of *circumcision.*

We must repeat, that as circumcision is expressly declared to be a "seal of the righteousness of faith;" and as it was applied by God's own commandment to infants eight days old, if the baptism of infants who know nothing of believing in Christ, is nullity and mockery; an absurd and foolish ceremony: *then*, the circumcision of infants who knew nothing of that righteousness of faith which it sealed, was also a nullity and a mockery; was also an absurd and foolish ceremony; and the divine commandment which enjoined it, a foolish and an absurd commandment.

3. These same objections are applicable to the scriptural doctrine of eternal life. "*He that* BELIEVETH and is BAPTIZED, shall be *saved*," quotes the Anabaptist. We continue the quotation: "*But he that* BELIEVETH NOT, *shall be* DAMNED.*

His argument is this:
Faith is required in order to baptism:
But infants cannot exercise faith:
Therefore, infants cannot be baptised.

We turn his argument thus:
Faith is required in order to salvation:
But infants cannot exercise faith:
Therefore, infants cannot be saved.

And so this famous syllogism begins with shut-

* Mark xvi. 16.

ting out our children from the church of God; and ends with consigning all of them who die in infancy to the damnation of hell!*

We are quite weary and almost ashamed of repeating answers so trite as those which we are compelled to repeat, against still more trite objections; but it is of importance to show that the heaviest stroke which the enemies of our doctrine level at us, is leveled, with equal strength, at themselves, their bible, and their God.

These remarks belong to that sort of argument which is called *argumentum ad hominem:* that is, an argument drawn from a man's own principles against himself. Its use is, not so much to prove the truth, as to disprove errour: not to show that our own cause is good; but that our adversary's reasoning is bad; by showing that his weapon cannot pierce us but at the expense of transfixing himself: so that if he prevail against us, he will,

* We do not say that the opposers of infant baptism hold such an opinion. Their most distinguished writers disown and repel it. But we say, that it necessarily results from their requiring faith, in *all* cases, as a qualification for baptism. They do not follow out their own position. They stop short at the point which suits their system. We take it up where they leave it, and conduct it to its direct and inevitable conclusion. Therefore, though we do not charge the *men* with maintaining that those who die in infancy, perish; yet we charge this consequence upon their *argument:* For it certainly proves this, or it proves nothing at all.

in the moment of his victory, meet his own death on the point of his own sword.

We owe our readers more. We owe a decision on the merits of the case. Which we shall attempt by pointing out the true use of the sacramental seal.

We observed, in an early part of the discussion, that the difficulty which produces objections like those we have been exposing, is created by erroneous notions of the church of God; by confounding visible members with his elect; and his covenant to the church with his covenant of grace in Christ Jesus; and that a proper application of this distinction will remove the difficulty.*

The sacramental seal has appropriate relations to these covenants respectively, and thus we distinguish them.

1. It has visible relations to the visible church. Particularly,

(1.) It certifies, that the covenant of her God to her abides, and secures to her the perpetual enjoyment of her covenanted privileges.

(2.) It certifies, that the righteousness of faith and the salvation connected with it, are dispensed in the church; and that there, and there alone, they are to be expected and sought.

(3.) It certifies, that the church is under the consecration of the redeemer's blood; has an un-

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ceasing interest in his mediation; and access in her public character, and in the acts of direct worship, to "the holiest of all."

(4.) It certifies, that the covenanted seed shall never be extinct; but that "a seed shall serve the Lord Jesus, and shall be accounted to him for a generation, so long as the sun and the moon endure."

(5.) It certifies that in the ordinary course of his providence, God will cause his saving mercy to run in the channel of his people's families.

(6.) It certifies, that the individual sealed is himself a link in the great chain for transmitting down, from generation to generation, the knowledge and execution of God's plan of grace.

(7.) It certifies, that the individual sealed has a right to the prayers, the instruction, the protection, and the discipline of the house of God.

(8.) In the baptism of infants, it certifies, that even *they* need the purification of that blood "which cleanses from all sin;" and that it *can be applied* to them for their salvation. So that infant baptism is a visible testimony, incorporated with the ordinances of God's worship, both to the guilt and depravity of our nature independently on actual transgression, and to the only remedy through our Lord Jesus Christ. If you reject it, you throw away the *only ordinance* which *directly* asserts the principle upon which the whole fabric of redemp-

tion is built, viz. that we are *by nature children of wrath.*

These are great and important uses of the sacramental seal; intimately connected with the faith, hope, and consolation of the church; and yet distinct and separate from an individual's interest in the salvation of God. Whatever shall become of him, they are grand, and solemn, and tender truths to which he is the instrument of perpetuating a testimony. Should he afterwards be a reproach, instead of an ornament, to the gospel; should he be "abominable, and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate," he shall perish indeed; but his perdition shall not affect the testimony given in his person, by the sacramental seal, to those blessed truths and privileges which we have enumerated. That testimony, that *sealed* testimony, is absolute; it is perfectly independent upon his spiritual state; and is precisely the same, whether he be "appointed to wrath, or to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."

2. The sacramental seal has a special relation to the church invisible, and to the spiritual mercies of the covenant of grace.

Union with Christ; acceptance in his merits; participation of his Spirit; the fellowship of his death, of the power of his resurrection, of his everlasting love, and an interest in all the blessings of

his purchase, the sacraments do certainly represent and seal. These glorious objects always have been, and still are, in the most lively and affecting manner, exhibited to, and perceived by, the faith of believers; and their personal interest therein is at times certified to their consciences by "that holy spirit of promise whereby they are sealed to the day of redemption." But all this is peculiar to the household of faith. It presupposes their interest in Christ; it is over and above the *general* uses which we just now specified; and is a secret between the omniscient God and the happy recipient.

The reader now sees, that the attestation of the sacramental seal is to be limited and extended by the *state of the receiver.* If he be only a member of the visible church, and merely within the bond of the external covenant, it certifies *in* him and *to* him whatever appertains to him in that relation, and nothing more. But if he be a member of the church invisible also, and interested in the saving benefits of the covenant of grace; it goes further, and certifies whatever appertains to him in *that* relation.

With the help of this obvious distinction we remove difficulties which are otherwise extremely perplexing; reconcile expressions otherwise irreconcileable; show the futility of objections founded on the want of grace in the individual sealed;

and demonstrate, as we promised, "*that the seal of God's covenant does, in every instance, certify absolute truth; whether it be applied to a believer or an unbeliever; to the elect or the reprobate.*"

CHURCH OF GOD.

No. VII.

Results.

From explaining the *uses* which the visible church, constituted as we have stated it to be, subserves, we pass on to some of its practical *results.* We mean certain principles, flowing, as necessary conclusions, from the doctrine which we have established; and which directly influence the whole system of ecclesiastical order.

1. The right and duty of *all them who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus*, to hold religious fellowship with each other, as God affordeth opportunity, are undisputed among Christians. Whatever be their diversities of opinion concerning the extent of that general description, and the religious fellowship founded upon it, yet within the limits which they prescribe to themselves respectively, they not only revere it as a duty, but esteem it as a privilege: They both insist upon its letter, and act in its spirit. A private

Christian goes from one congregation to another, and is received upon the evidence of his having been a member of that which he left. A minister of the gospel travels into parts distant from the place and society where he was ordained; and preaches the word, without scruple, in any other part of the world; and without a thought of his wanting a new commission. A person lawfully baptized is every where considered as under sacramental consecration to God in Christ; and nobody dreams of repeating his baptism. We make no account of the question about a valid or invalid ministry, because we confine ourselves, at present, to the communion which obtains among those who are agreed on this point.

We ask, then, what is the origin and reason of this communion? What is there to render it lawful and proper? "A common interest," you will say, "in the Christian ordinances, and the benefits dispensed by them." No doubt. But what is the basis of this common interest? How did it become common? "Christ has procured it for his church." Most certainly. But *what* church? The church of those who are "written in the Lamb's book of life?" Nothing more incontrovertible. Yet do you not perceive that you have laid the foundation of all religious fellowship in this—that the elect church of the redeemed is ONE? and that individual Christians enjoy their

spiritual immunities, merely as *parts of that great whole* to which Christ has bequeathed them? As members of the *one* "household of faith?" As citizens of the *one* "city of God?" That the right to spiritual privileges turns precisely on this point, "They are given to the church, and I am a member of the church." But as there can be no external communion without an external church, and as all the sections of true believers all the world over, compose but one church invisible, it follows that the sections, or if you will, congregations, of visible believers, compose but one visible church. For it seems unreasonable to say, that the *whole* number of real Christians should not bear the same general relation to the *whole* number of professing Christians among whom they are included, with that which every *portion* of real Christians bears to that *portion* of professed Christians in which it is included. But the relation which a number of true Christians, in the bonds of Christian fellowship, bear to the external society to which they belong, is that of a *part* of the Church catholic invisible, to a *particular* visible church. Therefore, the relation which all the parts of the church invisible bear to all particular visible churches, is that of one general church invisible to one general church visible.

Again: The several portions of real Christians are related to their aggregate number, as *parts of*

a great whole which is the Catholic church invisible. Therefore, all the portions or congregations of professed Christians are related to each other as *parts of a great whole*, which is the Catholic church visible.

Hence it results, that as a right to those privileges which the Lord Jesus hath purchased for his redeemed, is founded in the circumstance of being a member of that church which is made up of them; so, a right to the external privileges which are dispensed by an external ministry in the external church is founded upon the fact of one's being a member of that church. It is on this ground, and on this alone, that the communion of churches is established. A man is not admitted to Christian fellowship in one congregation because he is a member of another—this would be a solecism. But he is admitted because he is a member of *the* church catholic; of which his communion in *any* particular church is received as evidence by every *other* particular church. He is free of the "city of God," and therefore entitled to the immunities of citizenship in whatever part of the city he may happen to be. We may illustrate this matter by an analogy from civil affairs. A citizen of the state of New-York carries his citizenship with him to every spot under her jurisdiction. It is of no consequence in what county or town he resides; nor how often he removes

from one town or county to another; nor whether he be at his own dwelling; or on a visit to a friend; or on a journey; whatever privileges belong to him in his general character of a citizen of the state, he can claim any where and every where: for example, the right of voting for governour, provided he be legally qualified.

On the contrary, a man's being an inhabitant of a particular city or town, does not give him the least title to the immunities peculiar to any other city or town. It would be very absurd for him to insist that because he had a right to vote for charter-officers in New-York, therefore he has a right to vote for charter-officers in Albany! The reason is, they are independent on each other. But if voting for charter-officers were a right attached to citizenship at large, then he could claim the right in any city within the state—and he would vote in Albany, not because he had voted in New-York, but because he is a member of the *state* which includes them both.

The very same principle pervades the church of God. Were it not *one*, no man could claim privilege or exercise office, out of the particular church to which he belongs. A minister is no minister out of his own pulpit and his own charge. It would be just as proper for an alderman of New-York to issue writs in Albany, as for a minister of a congregation in New-York to offer to

preach in Albany. The effect would be, that a minister must have a new commission, that is, a new ordination, for every new church he should preach in.

We know that no church under heaven is able to carry this principle out into practice. There is but one of two ways to avoid the embarrassment:

Either, communion between the members and ministers of different congregations, is the result of an agreement between them; or the independent churches themselves do act upon the principle which they deny, the catholic unity of the church.

If the latter, our point is gained. If the former, then the communion of churches is derived, not from their communion with our Lord Jesus Christ, nor from his authority; but from a *human compact;* and thus far we have no *Christian* privileges at all.

If, to elude the force of this conclusion, it be said, that Christ has warranted and required his churches, although independent of each other, to keep up their fellowship in his name—we reply, that this is a contradiction. Because the very fact of his uniting them in such fellowship constitutes them, to its whole extent, but *one body*, the members of which cannot possibly be independent on each other. The issue is, that all Christian and ministerial communion originates in the visible

unity of the catholic church; and that there is no explaining its reason, nor preserving its existence, without admitting, in some shape or other, that the church of God is *one*—this is our *first* result.

2. From the relation in which the children of believing parents stand in the church of God there result mutual rights and duties.

1st. Such children have a *right*, even in their infancy, to a solemn acknowledgment of their membership by the administration of baptism—they have a right to the individual and collective prayers of Christians; that is to be remembered before the throne of grace by Christians in their retired devotion, and in the public worship of the church.—They have a right, during their tender age, to her instruction, her protection, and her salutary control. It would be strange, indeed, if little children, who were so graciously noticed by her king and her God, should have no claim upon her parental affection. They are her hope; they are the sēed from which she is to look for "trees of righteousness; the planting of JEHOVAH that he may be glorified." And, as such, they are intitled to her patient and assiduous culture.

This is the birth-right of the children of those who name the name of the Lord Jesus. We had it from our fathers. "They trusted in God; they trusted in him and they were not confounded." He was their God; and he was our God also, be-

cause he was the God of their seed. Thus "the lines fell unto us in pleasant places; yea we had a goodly heritage." Owning the God of our fathers, we call upon him as the God of our seed; and the inheritance which we derived from them we transmit to our sons and our daughters, that they may hand it down to their children, and their children to another generation. Our giddy youth undervalue this privilege; our profane youth laugh at it. In doing so they "observe lying vanities, and forsake their own mercies." Such as have come to their right mind, and have learned to sit at the feet of Jesus, will say, with heartfelt emotion, in the words of Dr. Watts:

> "Lord, I ascribe it to thy grace;
> And not to chance, as others do;
> That I was born of Christian race,
> And not a heathen or a Jew."

2d. There are *duties* corresponding with these privileges. Youth born in the Christian church, acknowledged as her children, and put under her care, can never shake off certain tender and solemn obligations.

They are bound to revere her authority, and to promote her happiness. The very law of nature intitles her to this. A young man who should evince, from the time he was capable of action, a studied contempt for the magistrates, laws, institutions and welfare of his country, would be held

to have renounced all virtuous principle; and, if he should elude the tribunals of justice, could not escape the punishment of public detestation. But why? Is it because God has entrusted his church with his living oracles; and dignified her with his gracious presence, that her counsels are beneath regard, and her control a matter of scorn? Is it because she has done more to prepare her children for usefulness, for comfort, and for glory, than mere civil society ever did, or ever can do, that she has forfeited their esteem, does not deserve a hearing when she exhorts or remonstrates, and shall have her most friendly and faithful services repaid with indifference or disdain? And shall behaviour which, in every other community would seal a man up for infamy, be applauded as spirited and magnanimous in the church of God? Let not the unworthy notion find a place among our young people; let them feel their obligation to requite, with kindness, the care which watched over their early days; and to respect the counsels and institutions whose tendency is not to debase, but to ennoble them; not to embitter their enjoyments, but to ensure their peace; not to lead them into harm, but to save them from ruin here, and to crown them with external blessedness in the world to come.

Let them reflect, moreover, that they are bound to own their relation to the church of God, by

professing the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; showing forth his death in the communion of the holy supper, and walking in all his ordinances and commandments blameless.

It is to be feared that even such of them as are of sober deportment; as carefully avoid every thing rude or unbecoming toward Christianity and Christians; as would turn with horrour from open infidelity, do yet, for the most part, labour under the evil of an erroneous conscience on this subject; and seduce themselves into a false and hurtful tranquillity. They seem to think that professing or not professing to be followers of Christ is a matter of mere choice—that the omission contracts no guilt, while it enlarges the sphere of their indulgences, and exempts them from the necessity of that tender and circumspect walk which belongs to a real Christian.

This is all wrong—radically wrong. The very mildest construction which it can bear, amounts to a confession of their being "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise"—of their anxiety to decline something which the service of God imposes, or of retaining something which it abjures—and is not *this* a most alarming thought? Do they expect to get to heaven with tempers and habits which are incompatible with devotedness to God upon earth? If they do not choose to "name the name

of Christ," is it not because they do not choose to "depart from iniquity?" Let them not cherish any delusive hope. *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. And if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his!* O let them weigh well the alternative! If they do, what possible reason can they assign for refusing to honour him before men? Nay, this cannot be admitted: for if *with the heart they believe unto righteousness, with the mouth they will* also *make confession unto salvation.* And Christ has told them that if they will *not confess him before men*, they have nothing to expect but that *he will not confess them before his Father who is in heaven.* By not confessing the Lord Jesus, they declare themselves willing to be accounted unbelievers. Are they prepared for the consequences?

Furthermore. It arises out of the very nature of the case, that if the most High God condescends to offer eternal life, in his dear Son, to sinners whom he might justly shut up under an irreversible sentence of death, they cannot slight his offer without the most flagrant ingratitude, and the most aggravated guilt. His *commandment* to receive the Lord Jesus Christ, as his "unspeakable gift," is peremptory: and disobedience to it an act of direct rebellion. To say then, "I will not profess the name of Christ," is to say, "I will neither submit to the authority of God, nor accept the gift

of his grace." With the very same propriety might you say, I will pay no respect to the moral law—I will go after strange Gods: I will bow to graven images—I will swear and blaspheme—I will not keep holy the Sabbath day—I will not obey my parents—I will murder, and commit adultery, and steal, and lie, and covet; I will do nothing which God has required; and I will do every thing which he has forbidden! Does the youthful reader start and tremble? Why? The same God who has said, Thou shalt not kill—thou shalt not commit adultery—thou shalt not steal—thou shalt not lie; has said, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.* It is the same authority which enjoins, and the same rebellion which resists. Thou canst not, therefore, decline that "good confession, but at the peril of putting away from thee the words of eternal life." And thou knowest what his word has decided.—*If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be* ————.*

There is something more. Many young persons imagine that they are not members of the church, until, upon a personal profession of their faith, they join it in the communion of the holy supper. This is a great mistake. The children of Christian parents are *born* members of the church. Their baptism is founded upon their membership; and not, as some people suppose, their membership

* 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

upon their baptism. On the same principle, when they arrive at the years of discretion, they may, in taking upon them their baptismal engagements, by a becoming profession of the Lord Jesus, *demand* a seat at his table, as their *privilege* which the church cannot deny. Their allegiance to him as their Redeemer, their King, and their God, is inseparable from their birth-right. The question, then, with them, when they reach that period of maturity which qualifies them to judge for themselves, is, *not* whether they shall contract or avoid an allegiance which has hitherto had no claims upon them: but whether they shall acknowledge or *renounce* an allegiance under which they drew their first breath? Whether they shall disown the prince of life, and wave their interest in his church? Whether they shall disclaim the God of their fathers; forswear their consecration to his service—take back the vows which were made over them and for them when they were presented to him in his sanctuary; his blessed name called upon them; and the symbol of that "blood which cleanseth from all sin," applied to them? Not whether they shall be simple *unbelievers*, but whether they shall display their unbelief in the form of *apostasy? That* is the question: and an awful one it is. As they value their eternal life, let them consider, that every hour of their continuance in their neglect of Christ is an hour of contempt for his salvation,

and of slander on his cross. How shall their hearts endure or their hands be made strong, when he shall come to reckon with them for their *treading him under foot, and counting the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing?* Reckon with them he will, and precisely for their *not owning him;* for they cannot, no, they cannot shake off their obligations to own him; although in the attempt they may destroy themselves for ever.

"According to this representation," I shall be told, "the condition of many of our youth is very deplorable. It is their *duty*, you say, to profess the name of Christ, and to seal their profession at the sacramental table. This they cannot do: for they are conscious that they do not possess those principles and dispositions which are requisite to render such a profession honest. What course shall they steer? If they do not profess Christ, they live in rebellion against God: if they do, they mock him with a lie. Which side of the alternative shall they embrace? Continue among the profane, and be consistently wicked? or withdraw from them in appearance, and play the hypocrite?"

The case is, indeed, very deplorable. Destruction is on either hand. For the UNBELIEVING *shall have their part in the lake of fire,** and *the* HYPO-

* Rev. xxi. 8.

CRITE'S *hope shall perish.** God forbid that we should encourage either a false profession, or a refusal to make one. The duty is to embrace *neither* side of the alternative. Not to continue with the profane, and not to act the hypocrite; but to receive the Lord Jesus Christ in truth, and to walk in him. "I cannot do it," replies one: and one, it may be, not without moments of serious and tender emotion upon this very point: "I *cannot* do it." My soul bleeds for thee, thou unhappy! But it *must* be done, or thou art lost for ever. Yet what is the amount of that expression: in the mouth of some a flaunting excuse, and of others a bitter complaint—I cannot? Is the inability to believe in Christ different from an inability to perform any other duty? Is there any harder necessity of calling the God of Truth *a* LIAR, in *not believing the record which he hath given of his* SON, than of committing any other sin? The inability created, the necessity imposed, by the ENMITY *of the carnal mind against God?*† It is the inability of wickedness, and nothing else. Instead of being an apology, it is itself the *essential* crime, and can never become its own vindication.

But it is even so. The evil *does* lie too deep for the reach of human remedies. Yet a remedy there is, and an effectual one. It is here—"*I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be*

* Job viii. 1. † Rom. viii. 7.

clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A NEW HEART *also will I* GIVE *you, and a* NEW SPIRIT *will I* PUT *within you: And I will* TAKE AWAY *the* STONY HEART *out of your flesh;* and I *will* GIVE *you an* HEART OF FLESH. *And I will* PUT MY SPIRIT WITHIN YOU, *and* CAUSE *you to walk in my statutes; and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.** Try *this* expedient: Go, with thy "filthiness" and thine "idols:" Go, with thy "stony heart" and thy perverse spirit, which are thy real inability, to God upon the *throne of grace;* spread out before him his "exceeding great and precious promise," importune him as the hearer of prayer, in the name of JESUS, for the accomplishment of it to thyself—wait for his mercy: it is worth waiting for—and remember his word; *Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be* GRACIOUS UNTO YOU; *and therefore will he be exalted that he* MAY HAVE MERCY *upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for him.*†

The *rights* and *duties* of the children of believing parents, arising out of their relation to the church, is only part of our second result, as they are mutual, let us now turn the question and view it in its relation to the rights and *duties* of the *Christian church toward such children.*

A right to provide for the proper education of their youth, has always been claimed, and exer-

* Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27. † Is. xxx. 18.

cised in some form or other, by every civilized community. It is, indeed, inherent in the very nature of human society; as it springs out of that great, universal, and essential principle of man—self-preservation. The risen generation, is, for the most part, fixed. Their habits are formed, their characters settled, and what is to be expected from them may be ascertained with sufficient exactness for the principal purposes of life. Not so with the rising race. No sagacity can foretell what characters shall be developed, or what parts performed, by these boys and girls who throng our streets, and sport in our fields. In their tender breasts are concealed the germs, in their little hands are lodged the weapons, of a nation's overthrow or glory. Would it not, then, be madness; would it not be a sort of political suicide, for the commonwealth to be unconcerned what direction their infant powers shall take; or into what habits their budding affections shall ripen? Or will it be disputed, that the civil authority has a *right* to take care, by a paternal interference, on behalf of the children, that the next generation shall not prostrate in an hour, whatever has been consecrated to truth, to virtue, and to happiness, by the generations that are past?

If this is the common privilege of human nature, on what principle shall it be denied to the church of God? Spiritual in her character, furnished with

every light to guide the understanding; and every precept to mould the heart—possessing whatever is fearful to deter from sin, and whatever is sweet and alluring to win to God and holiness, how is it possible that she can have no *right* to bring these her advantages to bear upon the youth committed to her trust? Why were they thus committed? How shall she deserve the name of the spouse of Christ, if she endeavour not to bring up her own children in his "nurture and admonition?" Admitting the children of believing parents to be her members, the right to instruct and watch over them, is a matter of course. For it is a solecism and an absurdity to talk of a society which has no authority over its own members. And when we establish the *right*, we establish also the *duty*. The power is given to be employed. It is a talent for which the master will demand an account. If he has authorized his church to take charge of the children within her pale, she is responsible for the manner in which she acquits herself of the trust. How is this to be done?

1st. All baptized children, (whom by their baptism she acknowledges to be a part of her care,) are to be instructed by her authority, and under her eye.

There is a domestic training which it is her business to see that parents give their children. But she has an interest in these children altoge-

ther her own. Her ministers, or official catechists, are, in her name, to instill into them, the principles of the Christian religion, *over and above their tuition at home;* and whether their parents be faithful to them or not. A child is not to be turned off, and left a prey to destruction, because its parents do not shrink from the crime of "blood-guiltiness," even guiltiness of the blood of their own offspring. Means are, therefore, to be used, that *all* the children of a congregation attend *public* instruction in the doctrines and duties of religion, as an *ordinance of Christ;* and to have the sense of their subjection to his ordinances incorporated with their earliest habits of thinking. No church can neglect this care without suffering: no church has ever fostered it without abundant recompense. The most intelligent, sober, staid, active Christians, are usually those who have grown up under the operation of this gentle but efficient discipline.

2d. The church is to inspect the *conduct* of her youth.

I do not mean that she is to encourage hawkers of scandal, nor to entertain legions of spies, for their benefit. Not that she is to put on that dismal visage which petrifies the juvenile heart; nor to indulge that morose inquisition which arraigns, as a crime, every burst of juvenile cheerfulness. It is as much a part of God's *natural* constitution that youth should be sprightly, as that age should

be grave. To reduce to one size and one quality, all the decencies of life in all its periods, is the attribute of zeal which never discriminates, of severity which never learns, or of Pharisaism which finds a righteousness in reprobating enjoyments which it cannot share.

But, after every proper allowance and precaution, there is left a large field of juvenile conduct for the eye of the church to explore. Both in affirming the principles of rectitude, and in resisting the principles of evil, she may and she ought to do much for her youth.

If a child be exemplary in filial or fraternal affection; pure in behaviour among others; diligent in learning the precious truths of revelation; reverential towards the ordinances of public and private worship; fearful of sinning against God; it is no small encouragement to have these excellencies observed, cherished, and honoured, by those who bear rule in the church. Timidity subsides; bashfulness is attempered into modesty; the ductile inclination grows into consistent purpose; and thus "little ones" are brought to Jesus Christ, and prepared for occupying, in due season, the places of those whose gray hairs announce the approach of that hour in which they are to be numbered with them who have died in faith.

On the other hand, can any reflecting person doubt, that the seasonable interposition of the

church of God, might save many a youth from falling a victim to his own depravity, or to the depravity of others? Why should a doubt be entertained on the subject? Is the experiment fairly tried? Are the churches in the habit of throwing themselves in between ruin and the youth who have not openly professed religion? Do parents, on the failure of domestic admonition, *ever* resort to this remedy? Ought they not to do it? Why should a tender and solemn remonstrance, in the name of the living God, the Creator and the Judge of all, be without its influence in recovering an unpractised sinner from the errour of the wicked? Why should not an *authoritative* expostulation, on the part of the church of God, brought home to individual feeling, have some effect, as a rational means, in prevailing with the young to consider their obligation to recognize the vows made over them in their baptism? There are more troublesome consciences on this point, among our youth, than we, perhaps, imagine. Why should they not be told, that continuance in carelessness, or abandonment to iniquity, will compel the church of God to disown them, and to rank them with those concerning whom she has no promises to plead? Let it not be said that "the state of religious society forbids such an interference—that parents and children would spurn at it as an encroachment upon their liberty—and that instead of

gaining our youth, it would drive them, at once, into the camp of the profane;"—at least, let not these things be said without *facts* to support them. They are the suggestions of fear, unsanctioned by experience. No doubt, in the decayed state of Christian order, much prudence is necessary for its revival: but the necessity of prudence cannot excuse inaction. It is very possible, also, that some young saints would "kick against the pricks." But the same objection lies against the faithful preaching of the word; and against the impartial use of discipline toward professors. There are weighty reasons why a judicious extension of church authority to baptised youth in general, would not be so fruitless and despicable as some suppose.

First, The mere power of *opinion* which it would employ, could not be easily resisted. It is to be remembered, that a very little quantity of opinion goes a great way with all minds which have not yet acquired self-stability; and *such* opinion as the Christian church can at all times command, no man living *can* disregard with impunity.

Secondly, In many instances, this interference would combine with domestic precept and example; and how far their united forces would go, nothing but the event is entitled to pronounce.

Thirdly, Dissolute as the world is, and disposed as multitudes are to scoff at every thing which

bears the image and superscription of Jesus Christ, it will be no recommendation even with thoughtless people, that a young person fled away from the voice of kindly instruction; much less that he was thrust out on account of his vices. Some there are, who, to serve the present hour, would applaud his spirit; and, on the first disagreement, would upbraid him with his disgrace. It is not in human nature to stand easily under an excommunication of *any sort.* Exclusion, for faults, from any decent society, is, and ever will be, a stigma. Whoever disbelieves it, has only to try.

Fourthly, The providence of our Lord Jesus Christ, and his control over the hearts and affairs of men, are especially to be regarded. Perhaps no instance can be shown of contempt upon the discipline of his house not being followed, sooner or later, with most disastrous consequences to the offender. He has promised to own, support, and vindicate it, as solemnly as he ever promised to bless the gospel of his grace. If more stress were laid upon *his* agency in rendering effectual his own institutions; we should both discharge our duty more exactly, and see it crowned with greater success. Let the churches *begin* to look after their youth—let them commit their efforts to their master's faithfulness. It will be time enough to complain when he "leaves himself without a witness."

3d. There is a particular class of children to whom the church owes a duty which she too frequently neglects—I mean *orphans.*

Godly parents die; and their little ones are scattered. Scattered, indeed, they often must be, but forgotten they ought not to be. They are often permitted to be placed in families where they can reap no religious benefit. All responsibility for them seems to be thrown away, and given to the winds with the last breath of their father or mother. Thus abandoned by the church, which ought to be to them in God's stead, and when their father and their mother forsake them, to take them up, they are in danger of being lost in this world, and in the world to come. I speak immediately of those who have no private dependence but the bounty of strangers. Guilt in this matter, there certainly is, and the sooner we arise to shake it out of our skirts, the better will it be for ourselves, and our *own* children.

Beside the conclusions which we have drawn from the general Constitution of the Church of God, relative to Christian communion, and the rights and duties mutually subsisting between the Church and her infant members, there is a

Third result relative to her officers; especially those who labour in the word and doctrine. It is this: *They are* PRIMARILY *the property of the* CHURCH CATHOLIC; *and only in a* SECONDARY *and*

SUBORDINATE *sense, the property of a particular congregation.*

Throughout the christianized world, it has always been customary, in a greater or less degree, to remove ministers of the gospel from one pastoral charge to another, or to liberate them from pastoral ties altogether, that they might promote, in a different form, the interests of the Christian cause. For very obvious reasons, these removals happen most frequently to men of talents. Nor is there a single thing which creates more uneasiness and heart-burning. It is perfectly natural. For neither individuals nor societies are fond of parting with what they consider a treasure. Able, faithful, discreet ministers, are a rare blessing; and it would say little for the understanding, and less for the religion, of any Church which should lightly relinquish it. We must further admit, that a wanton disruption of the pastoral ties is foolish, unwarrantable, and extensively pernicious.

Still the question of its propriety must be tried, not by examples of its abuse, nor by its unpopularity, but by the *principles* on which it is founded, This cannot be done, without examining the nature of the claim which a particular congregation has to her minister.

The pastoral connexion is commonly compared to a matrimonial connexion; which, being for

life, the popular inference is, that the pastoral connexion also is for life.

This proves nothing, except the facility with which most people impose upon themselves by sounds and similes. A simile is no argument. And the simile of a man and his wife, to denote a pastor and his congregation, is peculiarly unhappy. If it is to prescribe the duration of their union, it must also regulate the discharge of their duties. Now, as married persons must confine their matrimonial intercourse to themselves, not allowing a participation in it to any other, this simile, working up the ministerial relation into a sort of pastoral matrimony, would render it absolutely unlawful in a minister to hold religious communion with any other people, and in his people to hold religious communion with any other minister. Nor, if a minister's just maintenance should grow inconvenient to a people's finances, or he should fall into disfavour, even without any charge of misconduct, would they think it sound reasoning to turn upon them with their own simile, and say, "A minister and his people are as husband and wife. A wife takes her husband for better for worse; so did you take your minister; and as you took him you must keep him. The plea of poverty or disgust is of no avail; a woman is not to quit her husband whenever she thinks that he spends too much of the fortune she brought him; nor is

she to run away from him merely because she does not like him any longer, or has a fancy for some one else. This is no better than downright adultery: and such is the behaviour of a congregation, who has grown tired of a minister, and wishes to get rid of him." It would be very hard to persuade a congregation that this is correct reasoning; and yet it is exactly such reasoning as we hear every day against the removal of a minister, grounded on the notion of something like a marriage covenant between him and his charge. The reasoning proceeds from feelings pretty general among men, prompting them to prefer a bargain which shall be all on one side, and that side their own. They wish to have the whole comfort without risk of privations, on the one hand, or of irksome burdens on the other. It is perfectly equitable in their eyes, that a minister should leave them to better *their* situation; but to leave them in order to better *his own*, is almost, if not altogether, an adulterous desertion; and even if it be to forward upon a larger scale, and with more efficacy, the advantage of Christ's kingdom, his authoritative removal is little, if at all, less than robbery!

But let us be just. They are not the people only who adopt this preposterous reasoning. Ministers have too frequently fallen into the same errour; and, in some instances, they have exactly

reversed the popular conclusions; stating it as good and wholesome doctrine, that a minister should have it in his power to retain his cure as long as he pleases; and to resign it when he pleases; but should by no means be subject to removal when the people wish it. Thus, in their turn, making the bargain all on their own side. This is paltry work: It is, on both sides, a calculation fit only for sharpers. In so far as it arises from honest opinion, it springs out of a radical mistake, which is to be rectified by considering how the unity of the visible church affects ministerial character and labours.

The mistake is this: that "a minister and his congregation possess each other, if I may so word it, in a mutual fee simple—that they have an exclusive and absolute right to each other;" whereas no such possession, no such right does, or can, exist.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, when he "ascended up on high, leading captivity captive, gave gifts unto men. And he gave some," (i. e. some whom he gave were,) "apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints; for the work of the ministry; for the edifying of the body of Christ." Eph. iv.

Here ministers of the gospel are said to be Christ's ascension-gift to his church! But what

church? Certainly not a particular congregation, for the gift includes ministers who never *could be* confined to so limited a charge. No one particular congregation; no, nor any section of Christians, though containing *many* congregations, could appropriate to themselves the labours of an apostle, or an evangelist. These were, beyond all contradiction, officers of the church catholic, or of the church visible.* But it is to the same church that Christ has given the *ordinary* ministry, "pastors and teachers." They are included in one and the same gift. Therefore, a minister belongs primarily and immediately to the church catholic; and only *mediately*, that is, through the medium of the church catholic, is assigned to a particular congregation. It is, of course, *her* province and duty to determine how, and where, he shall be employed. The only rule of judgment is, *the greatest amount of benefit which may accrue from his services to the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom.* The determination of this point must be confided to such a portion of the church catholic, assembled in judicatory, (since it is impossible for the whole to meet,) as shall secure, according to human probabilities, a wise and impartial decision. To lodge such a power in the hands of a particular congregation, would be manifestly improper;

* See page 1—26.

for it would not only make one set of men the judges in their own case, and in their neighbour's too, but would subject the great interests of the church of God to the control of persons unfurnished with sufficient information, often impassioned, always prepossessed; and, therefore, incapable of "judging righteous judgment." Mistakes, and improprieties will, no doubt, occur, be the power where it may: because perfection is to be found no where. Yet, when a question is to be tried before a court composed of representatives from several particular churches, having much more ability, and better opportunities of informing themselves, than the mass of any congregation can have: being also free from that selfish bias to which the best minds and hearts are liable from calculations directly affecting themselves, it is in as fair a way of being decided well, as the imperfection of man admits. When such a court, then, fixes the pastoral relation between a minister and a congregation, it does not surrender him up absolutely to them; nor wed them to each other for life. It places him there, because it believes that his labours there will be, upon the whole, most useful to the church at large. And the principle which regulates the formation, must also regulate the continuance, of his pastoral relations. He is to remain so long as the church of God shall gain more by his continuance than by his removal, and

no longer. Whenever it shall clearly appear that his labours may be turned to better account by his removal than by his continuance, he ought to be removed: not, however, at his own discretion, or the discretion of his people, but upon the same careful examination by the church representative, as preceded his first settlement. We repeat, that it would be unreasonable and unrighteous, to let an individual or a congregation possess the power of sacrificing to their narrow gratification, the interest of the Christian community. Ministers, then, must be in that situation which shall render their labours of the greatest utility. They are ordinarily joined to parochial charges; because this, upon the whole, is the best practical system; and not because their charges have an exclusive property in them. The claims of the church at large, always supersede the claims of any particular part; so that whatever be the attachment of a people to their minister, or of a minister to his people, when the *general* claim is set up, their particular feelings must give way; and that upon this self-evident truth, that the whole is greater than a part. Pursuing the same reasoning, we perceive, that whether a minister shall have a congregation or not, is a question of secondary importance; and is to be answered by a prudent consideration of the previous question,—whether he

is likely to be more extensively useful with or without a congregation?

That removals from charges where men are beloved and useful, ought not to be rash; ought not to take place, without the most solid reasons; ought, in all cases, to be managed with circumspection and with dignity; that the very uneasiness excited by such removals, ought to be weighed in the balances among the strong reasons against them are dictates of common sense and equity; and no wise judicatory will ever disregard them. But that the *principle* is sound—that a minister may *lawfully* be removed from one charge to another; or from one species of labour to another, cannot be controverted, without tearing up the foundations of the whole church of God.

Finally. A very important result from the foregoing discussions concerning the nature of the church is, that *no form of church government can be scriptural, which is not adapted to this broad and master-principle, that the visible church is* ONE.

Her external organization must be such as shall show her to the world, as *a living body*, according to the apostle's figure. Eph. iv. 12. 16. She must, therefore, have principles, and means, of common action. The whole must control the parts—She must have a power of self-preservation, which includes,

1. A power of commanding the agency of any particular member:
2. A power of combining the agency of *all* her members:
3. A power of providing for her nourishment and health:
4. A power of expelling impurities and corruptions.

These things are essential to her organization according to the description given of her in the word of God. We may have occasion to illustrate them more particularly hereafter; we close, at present, with one remark—that a number of particular churches not united in mutual dependence, and not furnished with a principle of living efficiency in one common system, so as to bring the strength of the whole to operate in any part, or through all the parts collectively, as occasion may require, no more resemble the visible church of Christ, than the limbs of the human body, dissevered, and not "fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part," resemble a healthy man.

CHURCH OF GOD.

No. VIII.

Officers.

A COMMUNITY so large, and yet so compact; formed, preserved, and perpetuated with so much care; directed to so high an end; and furnished with principles of such universal application, as we have proved the church of God to be, requires a suitable regimen. God is the God of order: no order can be kept up any where without government; and no government can exist without officers to administer it. Our next inquiry, therefore, relates to the *officers* whom Christ hath appointed.

In the Apostolical church were the following: viz.

1. APOSTLES,—1 Cor. xii. 28. Eph. iv. 11.
2. PROPHETS,—Rom. xii. 6. 1 Cor. xii. 28 Eph. iv. 11.
3. EVANGELISTS,—Eph. iv. 11.

4. Pastors and teachers,—*Ibid.* Acts xiii. 1.
who *ruled*,——
who also *laboured in word and doctrine*,—— } 1 Tim. v. 17.

5. Elders, who "ruled" *without* "labouring in word and doctrine,"——*Ibid.*

6. Deacons,——Acts vi. 1—6. 1. Tim. iii. 8.

It is evident that the great object of all these offices was the religious education of the world. We mean that they were intended to instruct mankind in the knowledge of divine truth; to inspire them with pure principles and spiritual affections; to form their individual and social habits to practical holiness, and moral order; in one word, to render them "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."

It is also evident, that some of these offices were only temporary. Which of them were designed to be permanent, and in what form, is an inquiry which we must postpone till we shall have settled a previous question.

It has been, and still is, a received belief among almost all who profess Christianity, that the Redeemer has instituted a regular ministry to be perpetuated in an order of men specially set apart and commissioned by his authority, for the purpose of inculcating the doctrines and duties of Christianity; and that no man may lawfully en-

ter upon its functions without an official warrant from them who are themselves already in office.

Others contend that this whole system is of human origin; is founded either in ignorance or in fraud; and militates directly against the nature and privileges of the Christian church.

Others again, attempt a middle course; allowing the general principle of a ministry, but leaving the application of it at large; and conceiving the exercise of gifts with the approbation of the *church*, that is, a number of professing Christians met together for public worship, to be a valid and sufficient call.

To clear up this matter, let us consider,

1. What the scriptures have determined concerning the *fact* in dispute: and

2. What are the uses, qualifications, and mode of preserving, a standing ministry.

1. As to the *fact*. These things are worthy of regard.

1st. It is undeniable, that from the time God set up his church in her organized form, (and even before,) until the Christian dispensation, there was an order of men consecrated, by his own appointment, to the exclusive work of directing her worship, and presiding over her interests: insomuch that no man, but one of themselves, not even a crowned head, might meddle with their functions; nor undertake, in any way, to be a

public teacher of religion, without an immediate call from heaven attested by miraculous evidence.

2d. The ancient prophets, "who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," foretold that the same principle should be acted upon in the days of the Messiah. Thus in Isa. lxvi. 21. *I will also take of them for* PRIESTS *and for* LEVITES, *saith* JEHOVAH—and Dan. xiii. 3. *They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.* The word rendered "wise," signifies teachers," whose business, and, according as they are blessed of God, whose happiness, it is to turn men unto righteousness. Our Lord himself has used the term in the same sense, as indeed it was a very common signification among the people of the East: *Behold I send you prophets, and* WISE MEN, *and scribes.* Matt. xxiii. 34. The force of the argument is, that these predictions contemplate events which were to take place in the Christian economy; and without which they could not be fulfilled. The passage from Isaiah refers to the "new heavens and the new earth" which the Lord should make: consequently, to New Testament times: And not only so, but to their most illustrious period—the restoration of the Jews, and the glory of the latter day. "Priests and Levites," to perform services similar to those under the old economy, there can be none; because the end of

those services being accomplished, their further continuance is impossible; and the economy itself has vanished away. Yet the prediction and the promise must be fulfilled: and can mean nothing less than this, that as the Priests and the Levites were appointed of God to minister in holy things during the former dispensation, and in a manner suited to its peculiar character; so there should be appointed of God, under the new dispensation, a ministry corresponding to its peculiar character; which ministry should flourish even in those days when the most copious effusions of the divine Spirit should seem to render it the least necessary. And this is a full answer to the objection brought from the promise that all Zion's *children shall be taught of God—and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, "know the Lord:" for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord.* Jer. xxxi. 34.

We say that an objection drawn from such passages against a Christian ministry, as regular and exclusive as the ministry of the Levitical Law, is of no weight:

For in the *first*, place, they are not more full and explicit than those passages which promise such a ministry: and as both are true, no interpretation can be admitted of one, which shall contradict the other.

Secondly, If the objection is well-founded, it sweeps away not only a standing ministry; but all religious instruction in every shape: prohibiting even parents to "bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;" and putting under a bushel the very light of the "gifted brethren"—which would be rather lamentable.

Thirdly, There is the most perfect consistency between a great diffusion of religious light, and great use of religious teachers. We find, by experience, that the most enlightened Christians do most honour and value an enlightened ministry. The ignorant, and the vain are most ready to suppose that they need no instruction. *Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser; teach a just man, and he will increase in learning*, (Prov. ix. 9.) *But, seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him*, (xxvi. 12.) The "principalities and powers in heavenly places," were no novices in the knowledge of God. But when they wished to obtain still larger views of his "manifold wisdom." they did not blush to take a lesson from the lips of Paul, (Eph. iii. 10.)

There is no difficulty in the appellation of "Priests and Levites;" seeing it was customary with the prophets to speak of New Testament blessings in Old Testament style; and not practicable for them to use any other, and be sufficiently intelligible.

3d. Our Lord Jesus Christ delivered their commission to his apostles in terms which necessarily imply a perpetual and regularly successive ministry. *Go ye, and* TEACH ALL NATIONS, *baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you* ALWAY, *even unto the* END OF THE WORLD, Matt. xxviii. 19.

That this command and promise though immediately addressed, were not limited, to the apostles, is so obvious as almost to shame an argument. But since we are sometimes required to prove that two and two make four, we remark,

First. That as the command is to teach all nations; it must spread as far, and last as long as nations shall be found. It is therefore a command to make the Christian religion universal; and to perpetuate it from generation to generation.

Secondly. That as the Apostles were shortly to "put off their tabernacles," the command could not possibly be fulfilled by them. It runs parallel with the existence of nations. It must, therefore, be executed by others, in every age, who are to carry on the work which the apostles begun; and who, by the very terms of the commandment, are identified with them in the general spirit of their commission, which is, to preach the doctrines,

enforce the precepts, and administer the ordinances, of Jesus Christ.

Thirdly. That the promise, "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," cannot without palpable absurdity, be restricted to the persons, nor to the days of the Apostles. Closely rendered it is, "I am with you always, even until the *consummation of the age*," i. e. "dispensation."* But what age? what dispensation? Either the Jewish, or the Christian.

Not the Jewish, certainly. It would be very strange if the grace of the Redeemer's promise should abide with his apostles till the end of the old dispensation, and run out exactly at the moment when it was wanted for the new one. The "world," therefore, is that "world" which Paul calls "the world to come," (Heb. ii. 5.) i. e. the Christian dispensation. "I have just introduced it," says the master, "and I will be with you to the close of it." The promise, then, as well as the precept, reaches to the end of time; and, like the precept, embraces a successive ministry to whom our Lord Jesus has engaged the continuance of his gracious presence.

4th. The Apostles themselves acted upon the principle of a perpetual ministry. "They ordained Presbyters in every church," (Acts xiv. 23.) Paul has left, in his epistles to Timothy and Titus,

* Ἕως της συντελειας του αιωνος.

as a part of the rule of faith and practice, particular directions for the choice of Bishops or Presbyters and deacons: And in his epistle to the Hebrews, (ch. xiii. 17.) he charges these widely scattered disciples, to obey their spiritual rulers, under this precise idea that they *watch*, says he, *for your souls as they that must give account.*

5th. The New Testament abounds with predictions and warnings of *apostacy* in the ministers of religion; which of course, implies the *continuance* of a ministry.

6th. The book of Revelation expressly recognizes the diffusion of the Gospel, in times yet to come, by the instrumentality of a public ministry, (ch. xiv. 6.)

Since, therefore, the Head of the church instituted a regular ministry in his church thousands of years ago—since he directed his prophets to foretell its existence under the new dispensation—since he gave to his apostles a commission which necessarily supposes its perpetuity—since these apostles themselves acted upon that principle in erecting churches—since the rule of faith has given instructions to guide its application—since the prophetic spirit in the last of the apostles has uttered oracles which are founded upon it—no conclusion is more safe and irrefragable than this; that a regular, standing ministry is an essential constituent of the church of God.

This point settled, that our Lord Jesus Christ has instituted a ministry which is to be coeval with his church, we now proceed

2. To consider the uses, qualifications, and mode of preserving, a standing ministry.

1st. Its *uses.*

The common sense of mankind, in all ages and countries, has taught them, that no system of religion can be maintained and perpetuated, without an order of religious teachers. Search the world over, and you shall not find a nation, civilized or savage, without such an order. The truth or falsehood of the religious system has no immediate connexion with this argument. It is founded upon a principle which includes the cardinal secret of human improvement—the *division of labour.* In other words, that to ensure excellence in any occupation whatever, it must be confined to a particular class of men, and these men must be confined to it. Set ten individuals to work at ten different species of industry, so that every one shall be employed by turns upon all the ten; let other ten work at the very same things, but distribute them so as that each of the ten shall have his appropriate employment, never intermeddling with the other nine; and two effects will follow—*First,* The produce of each particular species of industry will be incomparably better; and, *Secondly,* The aggregate produce of all will be incomparably

greater, upon the second plan than upon the first. That is, the work performed in the ten branches of industry by ten men, each one being limited to a particular branch, will be incomparably superiour in quality and quantity, to the work performed by the same number of hands labouring promiscuously in all the branches. Whoever disputes this position, has yet to learn the first letter in the alphabet of human experience. Apply this to the church of God. The religious cultivation of a people upon the principles of revelation, furnishes matter not only for a *separate* calling; but for a calling which requires *subdivision.*

The rules of faith and duty are comprised in a miscellaneous volume, the different parts of which are to be studied, compared, explained, enforced. This is not the work of a novice; of an occasional exhorter; of one who spends six days of the week in a secular employment; and comes forth on the sabbath to vent his babblings under the name of preaching. Talent, learning, and labour, have found the week short enough for the right preparation of a people's spiritual food, and the discharge of other ministerial functions. In proportion as intellect is strong, knowledge deep, and the habit of application vigorous, is a sense of the ministerial trust impressive and awful. Feebleness of mind, and the conceit of ignorance,

make it sit light upon the heart, and frustrate some of its noblest effects.

Were we not accustomed to absurdities, we should think it unaccountable, that, while the education of children is an exclusive occupation, the education and direction of children and men both, should ever be merely an incidental matter; and be left to the chance-medley of a fugitive hour! Had Christianity set out upon this maxim, she had never reached the age of one hundred years. Her divine head did not commit her, for a single day, to such irregular and incompetent guidance. Those things which, in later times, are the fruit of patient and painful investigation, were, at the beginning of her career, in the East, open to every eye and familiar to every mind. Yet her teachers were a separate order, as the very face of her history in the New Testament shows. If Timothy, who was an extraordinary officer, a native of those regions from which the scriptural allusions and illustrations are taken; a disciple, too, of an inspired master, was enjoined to "*give himself to reading*, to exhortation, to doctrine;" if he was not to neglect, but to stir up the "gift which was in him, which was given him by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery"—If he was to meditate upon these things; to give himself *wholly* to them; that his *profiting* might appear to all;" how can equal diligence and appli-

cation be dispensed with in others who have to encounter much greater difficulties without the same advantage? How dare men, not possessing the hundredth part of the information necessary to elucidate a single chapter of the Bible, which happens to contain matter beyond the simplest rudiments of Christianity, how do they *dare*, under such circumstances, to ascend the pulpit as expounders of "the oracles of the living God?" If "the priest's lips must keep knowledge, because he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts," how shall the crude and undisciplined mind "bring forth things new and old?" It is not possible; the constitution of God's world forbids, that a man who is busied six days out of seven, in mechanical, commercial, or other secular toil, should have his intellect *trained* to the immensely important and comprehensive duty of instructing his fellow-men in the will of God, and the science of happiness. If the diffusion of religious light; if the formation of the moral habits of a community; if the prevention and suppression of errour and vice; if the consolation of the afflicted; if the administration of ordinances designed of God as means of eternal life, do not demand an entire devotedness of those to whom they are intrusted, nothing can.

It is vain and foolish to dissemble facts. All sound exposition of the scriptures; i. e. all the

pure and steady light of truth which shines in the churches, has been the work of men thus devoted. The discourses of others are, for the most part, mere shreds pilfered from the webs woven by that industry, learning, and talent, which they affect to undervalue. That usurpation of the sacred office, termed *lay-preaching*, now grown so common, cannot fail, unless a miracle should invert the course of nature, to degrade, and if it become general, to destroy, the ministry of reconciliation. The enemy could desire nothing more noxious to Christianity, than gradually to expel all cultivated talent from her pulpits; and to throw her interests into the hands of men self-approved, and self-sent. There is, indeed, an apology, which, though insufficient, cannot be denied to have a foundation. Shrewd men, even in vulgar life, hear preachers, who, in the cant prase, have been *regularly bred*, utter very small discourse; confine their lucubrations to a few plain points, repeat the same things in the same way, and that none of the best, until every person of a tolerably retentive memory, can tell pretty nearly beforehand, what "entertainment" is to be expected. With such facts habitually before them, they learn to imagine that the ministry is no mighty affair; they say, and they say truly, that "they can preach as well themselves;" and the next step is *to try*. The people perceive no great superiority or inferiority;

and why should they maintain a man for giving them instruction of no better quality, than they can get for little or nothing? All this is natural; and more, it is reasonable. Why, indeed? Let us not pretend to dispute what the world knows to be true. Let us not shut our eyes upon our own disgrace, and the ruin of the Christian cause.

Pudet hæc opprobria! We have ample ground for humiliation. There are many, many "regularly bred" clergy, who are much fitter to make shoes, or buttons, or baskets, than to make sermons. No disrespect to any branch of mechanical industry; but every thing in its place. No men can be more out of place, than multitudes who are in the ministry. It was a sad mistake which caused them to stray into the pulpit. How has this happened? By what fatal perversion has the province of *instructing* mankind in things pertaining to God and to eternity, fallen so frequently into the hands of the ignorant and stupid? And why, when young men, neither stupid nor ignorant, enter upon it, does the progress of their ministry so little correspond with its original promise?

There are two prominent reasons.

(1.) The miserable provision for their temporal support.

When men consecrate themselves to the religious weal of a people, and do, by that act, forego the opportunities open to all others, of providing

for themselves and their families, a competent maintenance is the least remuneration which they have a right to claim. It is the dictate of common sense, common justice, and common humanity. It is also the express commandment of our Lord Jesus Christ. But, notwithstanding these considerations, the ministry is little better than a starving profession. Not one man in twenty, were he compelled to live upon the salary allowed by his congregation, could escape from beggary and rags. The certain effect is, on the one hand, to deter young men of respectable talents from the ministry altogether; and, on the other, to discourage, depress and finally to ruin those who are in it already.

That degree of talent which fits one, so far as intellectual endowments go, for a useful minister of the Gospel, is much rarer than many seem to imagine; and, humanly speaking, has its temporal prosperity in its own power. When other pursuits invite by the promise of not only a maintenance, but of gain, and even of opulence, it is idle, it is unreasonable, to hope that youth of talents, without fortune, whatever be their piety, will serve the church of God at the expense of devoting themselves to infallible penury, and all the wretchedness which belongs to it. They may desire, they may wish; and, in some instances, from that simplicity which never calculates or which flatters itself that

something favourable "will turn up," they may venture: but in general, they must turn away with a sigh from the employment which, of all others, their hearts most long after. Let us not hear of self-denial, spiritual-mindedness, and a heroic indifference to worldly things, as characteristic of the true minister of Christ. Self-denial does not mean starving. The spirituality of the father will not stop the cravings of his children when they cry for food; nor is there any heroism in preferring tatters and a hovel to decent clothing and lodging, when they may be had. It is very convenient, no doubt, for men who are adding house to house, field to field, thousand to thousand, to harangue, in a religious style, on the necessity of a minister's imitating his master, "who had not where to lay his head;" when the practical inference from all this is in favour of their own pockets. They are wonderfully concerned for spirituality and self-denial to be practised by their ministers; but as to their *own* share of these virtues; as to *their* parting with a pittance of *their* pelf to render him comfortable—why—that is another affair. It is one of the most wicked forms of hypocrisy to plead for the cultivation of a minister's heavenly-mindedness, by way of an apology for cheating him out of his bread. The sin of the neglect complained of is not equally gross in all. In some it proceeds from thoughtlessness; in others from

incapacity to make a right estimate; but in most, it is the fruit of downright covetousness. There has been, on this subject, an absurd squeamishness in those whom the Lord has authorized to "live by the gospel." They have borne, and forborne; they have submitted to every species of sacrifice rather than disoblige their people; and their only reward has been an accumulation of injuries and cold-blooded contempt. It is time for them to claim their due in a modest, but manly tone; and throw the fearful responsibility of expelling an enlightened ministry from the church upon those who are able, but not willing, to support it honourably. We say an "enlightened" ministry. For we have no conception that niggardly provision will soon strip her of every thing in the shape of a minister. You cannot place the pecuniary recompense so low, as that it shall not be an object for somebody. Fix your salaries at 50 dollars a-year, and you shall not want candidates. But then they will be *fifty-dollar-men.* All genius, all learning, all high character, all capacity for extensive usefulness, will be swept away; and rudeness, ignorance, impudence, and vulgarity, will become the religious directors of the nation. The man is blind who does not see matters fast hastening to this issue in the United States.

In the mean time, such ministers as are better qualified for their stations, are not only decreasing

in proportion to the population, but with few exceptions, are prohibited from cultivating the powers which they possess. Remote from literary society; without libraries; without leisure to use what books they have; distracted with anxiety for their immediate subsistence; doomed to the plough or some other secular business, to keep themselves fed and clothed, their intellect becomes enfeebled; their acquisitions are dissipated; their ministry grows barren; their people indifferent; and the solid interests of Christianity are gradually, but effectually, undermined. Let the churches be warned. They have long slept on the edge of a precipice; the ground is caving in below them; and still they are not aware. Not a place of any importance is to be filled without the utmost difficulty. The search must be made from Dan to Beersheeba; often, very often, unsuccessfully; and when successful it is only enriching one church by the robbery of another. The population of our country is increasing with unexampled rapidity; very incompetent means are used to furnish an efficient ministry; and the people themselves are throwing the most fatal discouragement in the way. All denominations seem to be engaged in a practical conspiracy to starve Christianity out of the land. Let them tremble at their deeds; let their loins be loosed, and their knees smite to-

gether, at the bare possibility that they MAY SUCCEED.

But it is not the people only who are in fault; for,

(2.) Much of the guilt of decayed Christianity lies at the doors of the ministers and judicatories of the church.

It is not *arguing* for the divine right of a stated ministry; it is not boasting about the excellence of "our church;" it is not lamenting over the supineness of the public, that will cure the evil. It is the *procuring a ministry which shall render attendance upon their ministrations the interest of both the understanding and the heart.* Without this, every effort is vain: and this belongs to Christian judicatories. Let the world see and feel that there is an immense superiority of the regular over an irregular ministry, and there will be no more lay-preaching; nor so much difficulty in getting a decent support. But it cannot be concealed, that little as congregations give, they often give to the uttermost farthing, "for value received." The mischief is, that the rule of abridgment becomes general, and the "workman who needeth not to be ashamed," must share the fate of him who is no workman at all. Ministers have themselves to blame for much of this evil. They have lowered the standard of ministerial qualifications. They usher into their high office men who have neither

head nor hands for any thing else. The apostolic directions, (in 1 Tim. 3.) are almost totally disregarded. Instead of "laying their hands suddenly on no man," they have been too much in the habit of laying hands upon every one they can find—novice or no novice—fit to teach or unfit—able to govern or unable; all are accepted—nothing, or next to nothing, is refused. An absurd tenderness; a fear of hurting the feelings of a young man or of his friends; an infatuated haste to meet "the wants of the churches;" has poured fourth a stream of ignorance and incapacity, which now threatens to sweep away the harvest it was designed to water. In the degradation of the pulpit; in the butchery of the scriptures; in the defaced beauty, and tottering pillars of the Christian fabric, is to be seen the reward of timid indulgence and chimerical hope. If the ministry, as a *public order*, is to regain its credit, its own mismanagement must be radically cured.

CHURCH OF GOD.

No. IX.

Ministry.—Qualifications.

THE *uses* of the Christian ministry, which was our first point, are, in several respects, so blended with its *qualifications*, which is our

2d point; that we cannot treat of the one without demonstrating the other.

It is the business of a Christian minister to instruct his people in what they are to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of them. His *first* qualification, therefore, is *piety*.

We are sinners. The characteristic principle in the religion of sinners, that, without which it is absolutely worthless to them, is SALVATION by a REDEEMER. Remove this—take away the incarnation and atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, give us any thing as the ground of our hope but *redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace*, and there is no more Christianity. Now for men, calling them-

selves ministers of the Lord Jesus, to omit the cross where he *gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savour;* or to debase the doctrine of the cross so that it shall cease to be our exclusive trust for the pardon of our sin, is to lay the foundation of their ministry in treason to the Son of God. The doom of such unfaithful servants will be marked with peculiar severity and horrour. The Lord, the righteous judge, will require at their hands the blood of their fellow-sinners; and they shall perish with the perdition of those who *crucify him afresh, and put him to an open shame.*

Less fearful, indeed, but sufficient to strike our souls with alarm and dread, is the condition of one who preaches to others a gospel which he has not believed to his own salvation. What drudgery! what wearisomeness! to proclaim a Saviour whom he does not love! Display the precept and the penalty of the law, he may. Declare the doctrine of the cross, he may. Expound the Scriptures, in general, he may. Defend the truth against its adversaries, he may. But how *can* he give to every one his portion of meat in due season? How *can* he feed the sheep? How feed the lambs of Jesus Christ? How sympathize with the children of godly sorrow? How accompany the pilgrim through the valley of the shadow of death? How bind up the broken-hearted? How comfort

others with the consolation wherewith he himself has been comforted of God? For these, the most benignant offices of the evangelical ministry, talent however great, and learning however profound, if not sanctified by the grace, if not imbued with the Spirit of Christ, are good for nothing. In speculation a believer, in the efficient principles of character an unbeliever, their possessor will pronounce his own judgment. Leaving to apostates their whole pre-eminence of wo, he will find nothing enviable in his "portion among the hypocrites, where there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth."

Let those who are already in the ministry look to their personal interest in the Lord Jesus Christ, "lest, having preached the gospel to others, they themselves be castaways." Let young men who aspire to the sacred office, give all diligence, in the first place, to "make their calling and election sure." Let those to whom pertains the introduction of others into the ministry, endeavour, by all such means as do not imply the judging of a man's state without external evidence, to ascertain the fruits of faith in their candidates for the pulpit. Let parents and friends be extremely cautious in destining a child, or a relative, at a very early age, to the ministry of reconciliation. Let him first, as a condemned sinner, "*receive* Christ Jesus the Lord;" and then, as a saved sinner, "*walk* in

him," before he "profess to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

But let us not be quoted as countenancing, by any thing we have now said, the arrogance of certain preachers and "gifted brethren," who set themselves up as exclusive judges of grace in their neighbours; and, with the most offensive self-sufficiency, go about praying for "unconverted ministers." It would do such men no harm to commune now and then with their own hearts; complying with the advice of Paul to the fastidious teachers at Corinth, who "sought a proof of Christ speaking in him. Examine *yourselves*, whether *ye* be in the faith," lest they fall eventually under the reproof administered to those bloated religionists "which say, *stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am holier than thou.*"

Piety, however indispensable to the ministry, is not, of itself, an adequate preparation. A man may be a very good man, and yet a very incompetent teacher. The apostle Paul has positively required that he be "apt to teach;"* i. e. have the *faculty* of communicating instruction.

This comprehends

(1.) A *good natural capacity.*

We do not mean that every one who is admitted into the ministry ought to be a man of *genius.* Whatever be suggested by individual vanity, or

* Διδακτικος. 1 Tim. iii. 2.

the partial fondness of friends, genius is so extremely rare, that if it were essential to public office, the Christian pulpit, the bench of justice, the university-chair, or the senatorial seat, would very seldom be occupied.—When it does appear, it is misunderstood, fettered, tortured, and, as far as possible, crushed, by vulgar dulness, by scholastic pedants, by that medium race, the mere men of letters—we wish we were not compelled to add—and, too often, by small Theologians. It will, however, force its own way: and as its proper object and work lie out of the ordinary routine of official life, it cannot enter into the standard of fitness for official employment. On genius, therefore, it is vain to insist, for it cannot be had. But a good natural capacity is much more common, and should be peremptorily required. He who is not apt to learn, will never become apt to teach. Most people imagine that education is to do every thing, and nature nothing. But what is the province of education? Not to *create* faculties, but to call them forth. Natural capacity is the material with which education works: It is the soil which she cultivates, and where she sows the seeds of instruction. Expend your utmost labour and skill upon a brick, and you shall never impart to it the polish of marble. Why? simply for this reason, that it is a brick, and not marble. Let a lad be tolerably stocked with brain, and his improvement

in the hands of an *able* preceptor will repay every care, expense, and toil. But if that important article be wanting, it is a *hiatus valde deflendus*—there is no method of supplying such a lamentable lack. One would think that this is so evident as to be a mere truism. And yet, evident as it is, the incessant introduction into the ministry of men whose natural incapacity renders themselves and their office contemptible, shows that it is practically disregarded. We may not dissemble—the interests in jeopardy are too precious to admit of temporizing—It is too notorious to be denied—the very Christian ministry seem determined to try, upon the largest scale, that most absurd and hopeless experiment, the education of a blockhead for public usefulness! The instances, we believe, are comparatively few in which the powers of a youth are put to any reasonable test in order to ascertain whether, in point of intellect, he is really worth training up for the ministry. College diplomas, considering the dishonourable facility with which they are granted, are but suspicious pledges of either knowledge or talent. Some years ago, a young man who had been originally a maker of brooms, and had "studied divinity," as it is termed, for two or three sessions, was exhibiting a specimen of his improvement before a foreign Presbytery; and acquitted himself so little to their satisfaction, that they judged

it necessary to remand him to his first vocation, as more commensurate with his abilities. This decision was announced by a venerable old minister, in the following manner :—" Young man : It is the duty of all men to glorify God. But he calls them to glorify him in different ways, according to the gifts he bestows on them. Some he calls to glorify him by preaching the gospel of his Son; and others, by making besoms, (brooms.) Now, it is the unanimous judgment of this Presbytery, that he has not called you to the ministry, since he has not qualified you for it; and, therefore, that it is your duty to go home to your father, and glorify God by decent industry in making besoms."

The mode of the old gentleman was, to be sure, somewhat original; but his spirit ought to pervade the church. Would to God he had dropped his mantle, and that it had been borne on the wings of the wind across the Atlantic. If every preacher incompetent, from a gross defect of natural capacity, were put to the same trade with the young Scotchman, how great would be the increase of brooms!

Some who have accompanied us thus far, will stop short here, and discover a willingness to dispense with acquisitions which were formerly considered as essential to a well-ordered ministry. " Piety," they say, " will keep a man straight upon the main articles of truth; and strength of mind,

though rough and unpolished, will enable him to impart them to others in a plain but impressive manner. This," they will add, "is vastly superiour to the drowsy discourse of hundreds who have been through college, have studied divinity, and pass for great scholars."

We protest, once for all, against learned dulness. Little as we delight in solecisms and uncouthness, we will pardon the maulings of Priscian's* head by the club of untutored power; we shall esteem ourselves repaid for an injury to syntax, or for a rugged illustration, by nature's pathos and vigour; when we should loose our patience with solemn insipidity, or doze under the influences of a leaden diploma; nor deem it any recompense for the loss of our time, that we were put learnedly to sleep. Yet, bad as this is, it is still worse to suffer the insipidity without the poor consolation of some literature to qualify it—an affliction of much more frequent occurrence than the other.

But by what sort of artifice do men cozen their understanding into such argumentation as this? "Talent without education is better than stupidity with it; therefore, talent ought not to be educated!!" Here is a colt of excellent points and

* Priscian, a famous old grammarian. Hence one who violates the rules of grammar, is said to *break Priscian's head.*

mettle ; He is worth a score of you dull, blundering jades, that have been in harness ever since they were able to draw; therefore, he will do very well without breaking! It is surprising that so many, otherwise discreet persons, will maintain that to be wise and good in the Church of God, which they know to be absurd and mischievous in every thing else. In fact, talent, instead of being exempted from the necessity of cultivation, is alone worth the trouble, and needs cultivation in proportion to its strength. Talents are born, knowledge and skill are acquired, God creates the one; he has left the other to be obtained by experience and industry. No talent can coin facts; and without facts it will run to waste.—Without information it has no materials to work upon; and without discipline it will work wrong. The power of doing evil is in exact proportion to the power of doing good. Petty minds produce petty harms and petty benefits. The errours of great minds are great errours, and draw after them deep, wide, and lasting consequences. It is of unutterable moment that they be set right in the beginning. This, in so far as depends upon human exertion, is the province of cultivation, which, of course, makes the

(2.) Part, of "aptness to teach."

What ought it to imbrace in a minister of Jesus Christ? We may distribute it into two branches;

the *first* consisting in literary acquirement; the *second*, in intellectual and moral discipline.

When we consider, that the Scriptures are written in languages which have not been spoken for ages—that they contain a succinct epitome of human history, in reference to the plan of grace, from the beginning to the end of time: going backward to the origin of nations, and forward to their extinction: marking by the sure word of prophecy, the various fates of various people, as well as the principle dispensations of providence toward the Church—that they relate events which cannot be vindicated against plausible objection, without painful research into the phenomena of our globe—that they are full of allusions to the works of God and of man—that they exhibit human character under all its varieties, intellectual and moral; individual and social—that their illustrations of truth, and formulas of speech are borrowed from objects equally strange to our habits and conceptions; from the face of the country; from the soil; from the climate; from the governments; from the idolatry; from the literature; from the state of domestic society; from the manners of the East—that the language of prophecy is wholly peculiar; being a system of symbols, which, though as certain in themselves, and as reducible to fixed laws of interpretation as any alphabetical language whatever, are perfectly un-

intelligible without the study of those laws——When we consider these things, it is impossible not to perceive that the study of the Bible allows of the widest range of learning; and that without a respectable portion of it no man can "rightly divide the word of truth."

Acquaintance with the *original tongues* is indispensable.

God has delivered his word to us in Hebrew and Greek, which being now, as they are commonly called, *dead* languages, are not liable to the fluctuations of a living one. These are the ultimate and the unalterable standard of truth, by which every doctrine must eventually be tried. Excellent versions the Churches have; versions, from which all that is to make us "wise unto salvation," may be learned by the humblest peasant or labourer, as certainly as by the accomplished scholar; versions, undoubtedly susceptible of improvement; but which the licentious spirit of the times gives us very dubious promise of replacing with better. *Timeo Danaos*—we invariably suspect these *amended Bibles*, which the Iscariot-bands of professed Christianity are labouring, on both sides of the Atlantic, to thrust into the hands of the unlettered and the simple.*

* There is a late most audacious attempt to explain away the *whole gospel* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; absolutely stripping it, with the single exception of the doctrine of the resur-

But the excellence of versions does not supersede the necessity of studying the originals. The very fact, that God has preserved them by a care hardly short of miraculous, would, of itself, establish our position. Why were they committed to dead languages at all? Why thus carefully preserved amidst the ruined literature of the world, and the moral midnight of the "dark ages?" To be thrown, neglected, into a corner? To be kept as a curiosity to feed the worms, and amuse the antiquary? To be decried by gabbling impertinence; or give the ministers of religion an opportunity of displaying their sense and spirit, by treating as unworthy of *their* study, and as beneath *their* notice, those *original* volumes which their God has not thought it beneath him to consign, for their use, to the safeguard of his wonder-work-

rection, of every principle which makes it "glad tidings" to a sinner; substituting in the room of "redemption by the blood of Christ," a barren morality, little if any better than that of the Pagans, who were "without Christ, without hope, and without God in the world;"† and straining into the "cup of salvation" the distilled venom of Socinian blasphemy. This fatal draught is handed about with incessant assiduity, and put to the lips of the unthinking, that they may "sleep the sleep of death." All this under the modest and respectful guise of, "*an improved version of the New Testament.*" The precedent of such treachery was set long ago. Its author is "gone to his own place," But the "improved version," with its accompaniments, show that his treason has not perished with him. "Betray ye the Son of man with a kiss?"

† Eph. ii. 12.

ing providence? For ourselves, we doubt not that his chief design in permitting the Hebrew and Greek tongues to die away; in protecting the remnants of classical literature, and causing it to revive, was that his blessed book might be read in the original; and that his Church might be able to assert and maintain his truth inviolate, by having direct access to the fountains themselves. And as little do we doubt that the cry which modern times, and especially modern infidels have raised against classical literature, and in which some Christians and Christian ministers have unwittingly joined, is a deep, though to many an unsuspected stratagem of hell, to bring the original Scriptures into gradual disuse; and, then, by discrediting the versions, to involve Christianity in embarrassment and shame.

Independently on the argument to be derived from the extraordinary preservation of the sacred records, there are other demonstrations of the necessity of studying them in the original.

All human works partake of human infirmity; and are marked with characters of the age in which they are achieved. The remark is universally applicable, because the fact is universally true; and must be so, as it involves a contradiction, or something like one, to suppose it otherwise. The state of the sciences, the style of the fine arts, the very form of handwriting, at a par-

ticular period, are stamped with characters by which the date of performances in them can frequently be ascertained, with sufficient precision, many centuries afterwards. If a man write a book which has familiar and frequent references to different subjects of human knowledge, these references must be regulated by the general state of that knowledge; and if it labour under any material defects, must participate in those defects. No enormity of genius, no distance of views and discoveries, like those of Bacon and Newton, beyond the sphere of his contemporaries, will enable him to escape, in *all* things, the common imperfection.

Now the best versions of the Bible are but human works. Stupendous works, indeed, are some of them, all things considered, but still human. They bear strong traces of the state of knowledge upon many subjects at the time when they were made. The effect is, that innumerable passages of Scripture are incorrectly rendered. The vast extension of physical science, of acquaintance with Eastern customs, and even of philology, within the last fifty years, has established a multitude of Scriptural facts; has cleared up a multitude of obscurities; has rectified misrenderings and misinterpretations which no integrity or perspicacity could once avoid; has decisively refuted the objections of enemies. The

process is still going on, and will continue to go on. For it is the wonderful property of the book of God, that it has never yet been detected in a mistake, even when speaking on those subjects of which the knowledge was either partially or not at all possessed by the penmen. Its enemies have often charged it with ignorance and errour; but a closer investigation has invariably proved the ignorance and the errour to be their own.*

* VOLTAIRE, more malignant than CELSUS, more impudent, if possible, than PAINE, and more witty, peradventure, than all the rest of the goodly brotherhood put together, lost no opportunity of reviling the Scriptures. And if a plump, round lie were now and then necessary to his purpose, as he was not over-nice in his means, he did not permit the want of it to interrupt his "useful labours." Once on a time he made a grand discovery, which was to dock off from the age of the book of Proverbs a handful of centuries, and so prove the book itself to be spurious. He found this good fortune in Chap. xxiii. 31. which the Latin Vulgate renders, "cum splenduerit in *vitro* color ejus," i. e. "when its colour," (wine,) "is brilliant in the *glass*." Now, drinking-glasses, being, according to Mons. Voltaire, a "very recent invention;" and being mentioned in this text, it follows that the book of Proverbs is *still more recent*, or it could not have mentioned them. Unhappily for the "grand" philosopher, the Hebrew original says nothing about *glass;* but simply "cup," so that all Mr. V's, argument can prove, at the utmost, is, that the Vulgate *translation* is later than Solomon; a most rare discovery! See the admirable work entitled *Lettres de quelques Juifs a M. de Voltaire*. Tom. III. p. 324, a performance which plays with the flippant infidel even as grimalkin playeth with an unlucky mouse; and of which the strong sense, superiour learning, grave irony, and blistering wit, threw Voltaire into as

† Dict. Philos. Art. Salomon.

But it is always difficult, and often impracticable, to push our advantages without a knowledge of the original. Under such a privation, the expounder or the advocate of revealed truth must trudge painfully on, yielding a blind credence to the assertion of another; and if, upon any occasion, the fidelity or the competency of his guide should happen to be suspected by himself, or impeached by others, he has no escape from the misery of suspense, or the shame of defeat. But when his acquaintance with the original enables him to measure all criticisms and glosses by that authoritative test, he can take his ground with a promptitude, and keep it with a confidence, second in value only to the ground itself.

Again. All living languages fluctuate. Old words become obsolete; new ones are coined; and of those which remain in vogue, multitudes gradually change their meaning, so as to convey in popular and even classical usage, ideas very different from what they expressed a century before. This fluctuation is extensive and rapid nearly in proportion to the varieties of industry, the competitions of skill, and the intercourse of nations.

great a rage, as Beattie's "*Essay on Truth*," threw the gentle David Hume. The point of their satire remains unblunted, and their reply to Voltaire unanswerable; notwithstanding the epithet of "pendant" applied to their author by Mons. Voltaire's distressed editor, fortified, too, by a philosophic quibble. Vid. *Oeuvres de Voltaire*, Tom. XLIII. p. 131. 8vo. 1785.

Eastern versions of the Bible suffer the least. The Eastern habits and languages being, for obvious reasons, more stable than those of the West. But from the changes which have passed upon the languages of Europe, the vernacular versions, understood according to the present acceptation of their terms, frequently put into the mouth of the sacred writer propositions most foreign to his sense; and lead the unwary reader into false and hurtful conclusions. Strong examples might be adduced from our English Bible; but our limits forbid the detail.

Further. The art of printing has multiplied books, we had almost said, into a nuisance. The multiplication of books has, in its turn, vitiated the art of printing. It has sunk from an employment for talents and erudition, into a mere mechanical craft. The voracious demand for books rendered this unavoidable. United with the boundless circulation of the Scriptures, with the quick succession of editions, and with the low price at which the copies must be furnished for common use, it has increased the number of typographical errours beyond all count. Some of these are of such a nature as to pervert the meaning of the passage, yet to preserve grammar and sense, and to defy correction from the context. Let us mention a curious instance. In 1 Cor. vi. 4. The apostle says, "If ye have judgments of

things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are *least* esteemed in the Church !" One of the editions has it, "set them to judge who are *best* esteemed." A glance at the original detects the mistake. But, setting this aside, no man could tell with certainty, whether we should read "least," or "best;" and a hundred critical arguments might have been mustered to show that the wrong reading is the better.

Besides; there are many things, and those of importance, in every language, which disappear, or rather never appear in a translation. We know that this is doubted, denied, and even laughed at by many. We cannot help it. It is the privilege of ignorance to laugh; of insincerity, to misrepresent; and of captiousness, to doubt. Leaving them in the possession of their several honours, we combine the suffrages of all candid scholars. There is a colouring, a vivacity, a vigour, a comprehension, a pungency of idiom, a felicity of reference in the structure of a word or the peculiarity of a phrase, which never can be transferred. There is a clear opening of sense to an eye practised in the original, which a thick cloud mantles the moment it passes into a version. There is a precision of construction obvious to a scholar of taste, the causes of which are more a matter of feeling than of argument; and though perfectly decisive, are too delicate to be perceived by the

uncultivated sense. Yet, in their effects, they tinge and beautify the whole discussion of a subject.

In conclusion. The adversaries of evangelical truth and hope, are much addicted to the practice of assailing our faith through the medium of criticism. What they want in solidity, they make up in boldness and in show. When you press them with the *subject*, they will criticise all your heavy matter away into the thin air of *metaphor;* little concerned if, in following up their principle, they criticise God himself into a figure of speech. When you press them with a plain text, they will flout at the translation, abuse the translators, and hear nothing but the *original.* When you produce the original, as little to their comfort as the translation, they smell a corruption in the text, and it must be purged by *manuscripts; any* manuscript being good enough to amend or discard an *orthodox* expression. When the manuscripts are rebellious, which commonly happens, unphilosophical Christians as they are, they must receive the castigation of *critical acumen*, i. e. the guesses of an Arian or Socinian mender of the Bible, are to sway our consciences in the question of heaven and eternal life; or we are to be degraded from the rank of *rational* believers to the pitiable plight of bigots, fanatics, and simpletons.

To repress this effrontery, and to shield the

community from the assaults of this rabid fury; as well as to meet the several exigencies enumerated above, there is no effectual means but the living teacher skilled in the original tongues, and imbued with the correspondent learning. The times awfully demand it. And if such employment does not require a separate profession for the ministry, and able and educated men in it, there is not, and cannot be, a human occupation to which every human being is not always and every where equally competent.

CHURCH OF GOD.

No. X.

Ministry.—Qualifications.

To a critical knowledge of the original tongues, a scribe well instructed in the kingdom of God must add an extensive acquaintance with *facts* necessary for explaining scriptural subjects.

These facts are greatly diversified in their nature, and are to be gathered from various provinces of human research. The more immediately important may be classed under the general heads of *historical* and *physical* facts.

To the historical class belong—

1. Annals; which record distinguished events, ecclesiastical, civil, political, military, commercial, &c.

2. The government, resources, and institutions of a country.

3. The biography of famous individuals.

4. Public and private customs and manners.

5. The state of the sciences, of literature, and of the arts.

The *physical* class comprehends facts relating,

1. To the system of the world—

2. To those phenomena, the study of which forms, what is commonly called, Natural Philosophy; and in which the progress will be short and slow without the help of *mathematics*—

3. To natural geography, geology, &c.

4. To the natural history of animals, especially of man.

The catalogue might easily be enlarged; for there is no department of human knowledge or skill which does not furnish something of value to a good Divine. The design of the foregoing specification is merely to exhibit a summary of things which embrace copious details, and with which an accomplished and well-armed theologian ought to be conversant. An adept in all of them he can hardly become; but such an acquaintance with them as shall enable him to turn their lights in upon obscure parts of the holy writings; and to dissipate the artificial darkness created by the foe, he may and should acquire.

"And can so much human learning—such volumes of history—such long narratives of political things and political men—so much natural philosophy, and astronomy, and geography, and all the rest of it, be necessary to preach the Gospel of

salvation? Cannot a minister prove from the Bible that men are lost and perishing, but he must fetch his arguments from the story of kings and kingdoms whereof not one of his audience in twenty ever heard the names? Can he not tell them of Jesus Christ, without telling them of Alexander the Great, or Mahommed, or Genghis Khan? Can he not display the grace of God, without the diagrams of Euclid? nor treat on scriptural symbols, without an algebraical equation? May not his doctrine be heavenly, unless he calculate eclipses? And must he be unable to dig for the hidden treasures of wisdom, without plunging into the belly of a mountain, or the bottom of the sea? Where did the Apostles get such qualifications? What had your human learning to do with the 'mouth and wisdom' with which Peter and John, two *ignorant and unlearned men*, put to silence all the Rabbis of the Sanhedrim? By what means do numbers of the most devoted, faithful, and successful labourers in the Lord's vineyard, make full proof of their ministry, and commend themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God?"

Against such glowing interrogation, reason wages an unequal war. Confounding and jumbling together things which have no alliance; tacking an absurd conclusion to an acknowledged truth, and pressing the fiction home upon the un-

tutored mind with an air of pious triumph, it cannot fail of persuading multitudes, who fancy they are convinced because they are amazed; and, arguing much more from their wonder than from their understanding, become the intractable converts of zeal without knowledge.

Our reply is short.

The Apostles furnish no precedent. All their defects were supplied by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. What progress would they have made without it? It will be time enough to quote them when we are placed in their circumstances, and can claim their supernatural aids. Let the Spirit of God be the miraculous instructor, and we shall immediately dispense with human learning. In that case we will leave the feet of Gamaliel, and hang upon the lips of a fisherman or a scavenger. Till then, we hold ourselves excused. But it is with the worst possible grace that we are referred to the Apostles as patterns of an *illiterate ministry*, when the Holy Ghost was at the pains to teach them, *by miracle*, things of which we are confidently told the Christian ministry have no need whatever!

As little can be gained by the examples of an illiterate ministry in later times and among ourselves.

That a plain, uneducated man, of good native sense, may unfold the elementary, which are the

essential, doctrines of the cross, with propriety, with interest, and with effect—that God has often used, and still uses, the ministry of such men in calling sinners to the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ, is both true and consolatory. Nay, he has made individuals, alike destitute of information and of talent, the instruments of conversion and confirmation to other individuals of superiour minds and attainments. But we are not, therefore, to pick out all the unlearned lackbrains among Christians, and set them to instruct the men of sense and education. God's sovereignty over-rules our infirmities, our mistakes, and even our follies, for the production of good; when, without his interposition, they could have produced nothing but evil. Yet this does not alter the nature of things. It magnifies, by contrast, the greatness of God; but shows no respect to the littleness of man. Our infirmity is infirmity still; and our follies are follies still. They are not converted into strength, correctness, and wisdom—nor are they to be repeated by us—because God has graciously controlled them for our own benefit and the benefit of others. Talent is his gift; learning is obtained by the favour of his auspicious providence. His people are under a sad delusion when they affect to despise his bounty; and to honour that which it is given to destroy—we mean—*Ignorance.* He is also a

sovereign. He may do as it pleaseth him. He can fit his instruments for their work. But his sovereignty is no rule of *our* action; and we must take instruments as we find them; i. e. such as *he* has made them. When we come with *our* offerings, we must bring of our *best.* As we cannot change the nature of means, we are bound to select those, which are, in themselves, best calculated to insure the end. Now ignorance is not so well adapted to instruct as knowledge is: nor can stupidity acquire or apply knowledge as talent can. God employed an ass to rebuke the madness of a prophet; but it does not follow that other asses are destined to a similar office; and are expected to bray as often as they encounter a prophet. We have no objection that modern Balaams shall be put to the same school; but we must first see the same power exerted to qualify the Teacher and *enable* the "dumb ass to speak with man's voice;" or we shall heartily join in requiting the noise of His *Dumbness* with a sound cudgelling; the precedent in the book of Numbers to the contrary notwithstanding.

If good is effected by ignorant imbecility, the true conclusion is, that means make no difference when God chooses to act; as all difficulties are equal, that is, are nothing, to omnipotence. But we abuse our reason; injure the truth; and affront the HOLY ONE, when, from such a fact we conclude,

whether formally or practically, that we are to clothe ignorance and imbecility with the authority, and assign them the duties of knowledge and power. We tacitly put ourselves on a level with God; we indirectly assert our omnipotence. Grant, as we cheerfully do, that, through the divine blessing, good has often been done, and much good too, by persons whom we should have pronounced unfit, on account of either talent or literature, or both, for the ministry of reconciliation —Does it follow, that, with the same blessing upon proper qualifications, the good would not have been much greater; especially as we do not argue on the supposition of miracles? It is a law of God's own enacting, and it is kept in operation by his continual agency, that all bodies shall gravitate, or tend in their motion, toward the center of the earth. But will a feather, therefore, overcome the resistance of the air as easily, and fall to the ground as rapidly, as a stone, seeing they are both acted upon by the same force? God preserves, by his Spirit, the functions of the animal economy. Shall, therefore, a kitten draw as much as a horse? It is his visitation which sustains our spirits. Shall the brains of a fool perform, on this account the intellectual exploits of genius? The analogy is perfect, because the principle is universal, pervading all the divine constitutions with which we have any acquaintance. The ar-

gument which it furnishes on the point before us, is irresistible; concluding with the force of nearly mathematical evidence, against the notion we are combatting; and demonstrating that, other things being equal, the most intelligent ministry will bring most glory to God, and most happiness to men. In the mean time, let Christian ministers and judicatories ponder solemely the *principle* of the following extract from the prophet Malachi: *Ye brought that which was* TORN, *and the* LAME, *and the* SICK; *thus ye brought an offering. Should I accept this of your hand? saith* JEHOVAH. *But* CURSED *be the* DECEIVER *which hath in his flock a* MALE, *and voweth and sacrificeth unto* JEHOVAH *a* CORRUPT *thing! For I am a* GREAT KING, *saith the* LORD *of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.* This fearful commination is levelled against the PRIESTS *who* PROFANED JEHOVAH'S *name.* And the profanation consisted precisely in their consecrating to him the *worse*, when they might have consecrated the *better.* "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!"

But all such declamation is founded upon a supposition which is manifestly false: viz. that a minister of the Gospel has nothing to do in his official instructions, but to insist upon the simplest doctrines of the Gospel in their simplest form. That they have been very extensively habituated to this practice where vital religion is cherished,

admits of no dispute. But that the habit is a good one, admits of much. We institute no comparison between *always* preaching the simple truths of Christ, and not preaching them at all, or preaching them very seldom, and very slightly. When my own conduct is criminated, it is no justification to plead that my neighbour's is worse. The evil to which we object, solemnly and decisively object, is, the keeping Christian people in a state of perpetual childhood. God has charged us to "leave the principles of the doctrines of Christ, and go on to perfection." He has forbidden us to be continually occupied in "laying the foundation of repentance from dead works; of faith toward God; of the doctrine of baptisms; of laying on of hands; of resurrection of the dead; and of eternal judgment." Yet it is not to be questioned; the fact is clear as day, that the mass of evangelical ministers never build above the "foundation;" never get out of the principles or mere rudiments of Christianity. Take what text of the Bible they will, you always find them teaching some one or other of these "rudiments;" always working at some part or other of this foundation. We do not blame them for this; but for doing nothing else. For seldom or never rising in their instructions higher than those things which the veriest novices in religion understand almost as well as themselves. There is little consultation

of the wants of different classes: little distribution of his portion to every one in due season. There is milk for babes. Good. Let the milk never be withheld: but there should be more. There is no meat for strong men. It is milk, milk, milk. This is the complaint. The effect is, that Christian knowledge is very scanty, and Christian attainments very low: so that hundreds and thousands of our most pious people are ready to be tossed about with every wind of doctrine which does not blow them out the precincts of their elementary principles. There are few incitements to study the Bible. With the exception of some doctrinal passages and moral precepts, it is a book of darkness. Some parts of it are even falling into neglect, and comparative contempt.

Hence the facility with which dissentions multiply, and all manner of sects and pretenders draw away disciples after them. Such is the effect. The immediate cause we have stated. The primary and efficient cause is more remote. *It is in the* DEFECTIVE TRAINING *of the* MINISTRY *itself.* We speak it boldly; because it is a most serious, and a most seasonable, though a painful and unpopular truth. Incapacity we lay aside: but we cannot too deeply lament that where there is not this incurable malady, yet, partly from want of previous preparation, and partly from want of means to pursue their studies after entering upon their

functions, the ministers themselves cannot enrich their public instructions. The Bible is not expounded; it cannot be expounded—It is not understood; it cannot be understood by men without learning, however respectable their native powers. Who can illustrate the modes of speech used by the scripture, its allusions, its similes, its parables, its symbols, unimbued with the knowledge of Eastern climate, customs, arts, and institutions? Who can trace and show the accomplishment of prophesy, without large historical inquiry? Who can repel the attacks, and wipe off the aspersions of unbelievers, if he be a stranger to those researches from which the attacks derive their force, and the aspersions their filth? The thing is impossible. In honest truth, the bible is to most of our clergy a sealed book. Their ignorance is unsuspected, because they have, for the most part, to deal with men more ignorant than themselves. But it is not to be conceived how few are the instances in which they could satisfy decent and proper questions, compared with those which should put them to silence. Here is the true secret of that limited sort of preaching which so generally prevails in our pulpits. Our ministry cannot help themselves. They do not know any thing else. Their communications run the length of the *matter* which they have to communicate. Even the fiercest decriers of human learning never

forget to display every patch and shred of it which they accidentally pick up. None more sure to turn up the bottom of their treasury than themselves. If any of them chance upon a smattering of letters, his light shall never expire under a bushel: the world shall be in no danger of losing the benefit of his lore. And though in thrusting it out upon his hearers he slander his authorities, by murdering their sense and their names together, he shall be admired as a prodigy, and revered as an Apostle. Say the ministers of religion what they will, if they employ no learning in their ministrations, it is because they have none to employ: and it is adding deception to misfortune, to play off their inability under the mask of a higher degree of spirituality of mind, and a purer desire of glorifying the divine teaching.

The evil is alarming; it is enormous. It has so overgrown our country, and is so deeply rooted, that its eradication by human effort is at best problematical. So long, and so commonly have both ministers and people been accustomed to it, that it is hard to convince many of them of its being an evil at all. The standard of ministerial character has been gradually lowered down from its once imposing elevation to the level of every voluble and boisterous prater. That which was formerly considered as the acquisition "of children and those of weaker capacity," is now, with many,

the ministerial attainment. The Churches have begun to reap the fruits of that tree which their own apathy and parsimony have nourished, if not planted. The bitter morsel has been only tasted hitherto. The meal of gall and wormwood is yet to come. Let them not deceive themselves. The period of desolation is at hand. They have been warned and entreated, years and years together, to provide for the suitable education of their ministry; and they have been deaf as adders to the voice of expostulation. Slow-paced retribution has begun her march, and will fulfil her work. Even now, the United States must be searched through for a single man fit to occupy a post of eminence or of danger; and the dearth threatens to increase. Let us not have the lullaby of Peace, peace, when fearful facts thicken upon us every hour. If the same apathy shall continue; if strenuous exertions be not speedily, extensively, and perseveringly used, there will be no averting the ruin. Things must rush on from bad to worse, till the truth of the Gospel is corrupted, its glory obscured, and its power withdrawn, an horrour of thick darkness overspread the land.

"Knowledge is power," in the same sense in which every other instrument may be denominated power; viz. as a means to an end. By itself it is as inefficient as any material weapon whatever. The weapon is useless without a hand to

employ it. No better is knowledge detached from a sound head. It would be wasting time to prove that mere learning is among the most feeble and inert of human things. Prodigies of erudition are frequently destitute of common sense; and, in the practical business of life, in all that relates to the direction of men, are more impotent than children. Such reservoirs of unassorted facts answer one good purpose, and only one; they furnish materials for those who can *think*. Heavy plodding industry must be content with the useful property, and the humble praise, of a pioneer for brain. Learning, therefore, although indispensable to an "ability to teach," will not of itself, impart that ability. To give it its proper effect two things are necessary:

1. Good sense.
2. Good sense well disciplined.

On the first we have already expressed our opinion; but its great importance will excuse a few additional remarks.

Were we reduced to the alternative of choosing between good sense without learning, and learning without good sense, we should not hesitate for a moment. Good sense, alone, will be always respectable; learning, alone, almost always ridiculous. No being is so credulous, so easily duped, so regularly absurd, so good for nothing upon an emergency, so utterly incapable of conducting

affairs, as a man whose memory is stored with all manner of information, yet is destitute of understanding to use it rightly. Whenever he comes into collision with native vigour, however uncultivated, he is sure to provide the means of his own overthrow. He brings forth his learning with the confidence of victory, and is amazed to find his artillery wrested from him, and turned instantaneously upon himself. Without the sagacity to perceive his error, he is in danger of repeating it as often as he turns disputant. A fact is to him a fact; and the odds are infinitely against him, that out of the million facts at his command, he shall select the one least likely to serve him, and that when, by the misapplication of one part of his learning he has drawn himself into difficulty, he will be unable, with all the rest of it to draw himself out again. The Christian story is full of examples of this mismanagement. Even the pulpit, where the preacher ought at least to be considerate, is doomed to dishonour, when occupied by indiscretion. There are many subjects which *must* be handled, but which require caution, dexterity, and delicacy. It is most humiliating to see a whole congregation in anxiety lest the preacher should violate the rules of decorum, and to be assured that the peril is in exact proportion to his quantity of knowledge. One learned sermonizer cannot advert to the structure of the human body,

and show the divine wisdom in the functions of the animal economy, without being as filthy as if he were literally dissecting a carcass. Another never touches the scriptural doctrine of the new birth, without similes and parallels of the most offensive kind. And if he lay hold of the subject *professedly*, never fails to entertain the female part of his audience with a system of midwifery! On all topics involving the relations of the sexes it seems impossible for some very good men to avoid such habitual coarseness as wounds and shocks every decent ear. These things are abominable. They proceed from a want of good sense. Learning is no compensation for such insults to human feeling. When they arise, as in a few instances they do, from a *disregard* to the courtesies of life, they are mere brutality.

These blunders and rudenesses good sense will never commit. Want of facts will greatly cramp its power, but will not debase it with trash, nor caricature it with folly. There is nothing which more surely tries it than the adaptation of subjects to circumstances, and the mode of treating figurative and historical passages.

Men of great literature, and even of good manners, who never offend against modesty, make most absurd mistakes in delivering to one audience discourses fit for another of entirely different character. They are very apt to do so, if they have

allowed themselves to be absorbed in a particular theme. Their favourite must be the favourite of all the world. Abstruse demonstrations, which years of study have rendered familiar to themselves, must, of course, be evident to the mechanic and the husbandman. An English divine, who was deeply enamoured of the study of *Opticks*, and was a very distinguished proficient in all its minutiæ, could scarcely preach on a text in the bible without sliding into his darling discussions. Accordingly, having to preach to a plain country congregation in Kent, he lectured them with much pith and animation, on his *dioptricks*, and *catoptricks*, his *refractions*, *reflexions*, and *angles of incidence.* They were greatly edified, no doubt; and the preacher was much delighted. It happened, however, that in going from church to the house of a substantial farmer, his host thus accosted him. "*Doctor, you have given us an excellent sermon to-day: but I believe you made one mistake.*" "*Mistake!*" exclaimed the Dr. "*Sir, that is impossible, it was all demonstration!!*" "*True, your Reverence,*" quoth Hodge, "*but them there things that you preached so much about you called Hop*STICKS; *now in our country, here in Kent, we call 'em Hop-*POLES." We think we have heard, in the course of our lives, sermons nearly as well adapted to time and place, and quite as instructive to the people.

The injudicious treatment of types, parables,

and all figurative language, has been so common, that it ceases to surprise and almost to displease. Habit gradually renders us insensible to faults which, at first, strike us with great force; and the unquestioned piety of many public teachers serves as a mantle for even their absurdity. In every walk of life, superiors will be imitated by inferiors. Blemishes are much more easily copied than excellence; and when the aberrations of thought have imparted respectability to a bad taste, the evil becomes almost incurable in minds of a secondary order. The irregular sportings of an active and untrained imagination, seduce, by their glare, the footsteps of imitation; and, what was, in the original, a splendid defect, becomes in the copy an unpardonable offence. Thus have successive generations of preachers regularly improving upon bad models, displayed their ingenuity in marring the beauty of the Scripture, in destroying the harmony of its parts, in breaking off the fine points of its most exquisite passages; and when they have committed all these ravages, and converted the book of God into a book of quibbles and conundrums, they please themselves with the self-flattery of having performed wonders of instruction and edification. Typical and figurative texts must be hunted to death. The more points of resemblance, the abler, of course, is the preacher; and the more he can find in a figure than

other people can, the more, are they taught to believe, do they see of the fulness of the Scriptures. *How* he made his discoveries, is a question which few think of asking. The marvellous has a patent for a sort of implicit faith. For the many, it is sufficient that he made them; sagaciously concluding that if the wonders had not been there, he could not have found them. There is, indeed, one consolation, and it is not a small one, that preachers who love the precious doctrines of the cross, will preach what is true in itself, however they may desert or mangle their texts. Yet this is no excuse for coupling with it all manner of nonsense, and fathering it upon the wisdom of God.

The most insufferable departure from the principles of sound exposition is that perversion of the plain facts of the Bible which is called *spiritualizing them.* As if there were not passages enough which contain fairly and unequivocally, according to the laws of proper construction, every doctrine of the Gospel! as if the Spirit of God had not made his own book spiritual enough!

It is inconceivable what havoc this species of mania, for it deserves no better name, has made in the sober and dignified lessons of divine revelation. And it shows how powerful is the influence of an irrational fashion, when even great men are swept by it into the bog of absurdity. Massillon's

sermon on the impotent folk around the pool of Bethesda, with all its eloquence, cannot escape from this censure. We have before us a thing called a sermon, prepared for the press too; which is a *morceau* in this kind of skill.

The author takes for his subject the history of Ehud's adventure when he killed Eglon, the king of Moab, and delivered Israel. After pathetically lamenting, in his introduction, the blindness of those who perceive in the context nothing but a plain history, he proceeds to unfold the mysteries which unveiled themselves to his eye. Every thing is transformed into a type. Ehud is a type; his dagger is a type; his left-handedness a type; the quarries by which he passed a type. In a word, he and his adventure are types of Christ and his providence. Eglon, too, is a type; a type of Satan; his big belly, fat, dirt, and all. But how was Eglon's *fat* typical of Satan? You may wonder, reader, but if you have any sense, you will never guess——Why even thus. Satan is the god of this world; he works in the children of disobedience. These children of disobedience are a vast multitude. The whole of them together serve as a *body* for Satan; so that he is a *fat* devil indeed! We are not caricaturing. We are relating a simple fact without exaggeration, and even *below* the truth! And this vile gibberish must be palmed upon plain people as *spiritual* preaching! Another

sample occurred in a discourse upon Gen. xxix. 2. where Jacob is related to have "looked, and behold, a well in the field; and lo! there were three flocks of sheep lying by it." This is all type.—The three flocks typify the three dispensations, to wit, the Patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the Christian. The well, too, is typical. And the preacher having desired his hearers carefully to observe that the "well was in the field," broke out into this edifying exclamation, "What a mercy, my brethren, that the *field was not in the well!!*"

We have quoted strong cases, but not stronger than others we could quote. They are the genuine consequences of that vicious mode of parodying the Bible, from which good sense is the only preservative. Considering how much of this harlequin trumpery is bandied about in the Church under the garb of *spiritual preaching*, it is little short of a miracle that the religion of Christ Jesus is not burlesqued out of the world.*

* This number was never finished by the author. Nor has any paper been found, containing his thoughts upon "the mode of preserving, a standing ministry," which was to form the last topic of this series.—Ed.

LETTERS

ON

FREQUENT COMMUNION.

ADDRESSED ORIGINALLY TO THE

MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATE-REFORMED CHURCH

IN NORTH AMERICA,

1798.

LETTERS

ON

FREQUENT COMMUNION.

LETTER I.

Introduction.

Christian Brethren,

We should greatly undervalue our spiritual mercies, were we insensible that "the lines have fallen unto us in pleasant places; yea, that we have a goodly heritage." The unadulterated faith once delivered to the saints; that religious polity which Christ hath instituted for his church; and a worship, on the whole, scriptural; are benefits which God bestowed on our fathers, and which by his grace they have transmitted unto us. To insure our peaceful enjoyment of

them they underwent no ordinary trials. It is the fruit of their labors, their tears, and their blood, which merit from their posterity an everlasting remembrance.

But, brethren, we should prove ourselves unworthy of such an ancestry, if, under the pretext of prizing *their* attainments, we become indifferent about our own; if we lose their spirit while we boast of their names: much more, if, falling short of their excellence, we do not endeavor to regain and surpass it. Magnanimous men! they not only cherished their light, but applied it to expose delusion, and to explore the paths of forgotten truth. Far from being satisfied with previous reformation, they inquired if any corruption had been retained, any error unnoticed, any duty overlooked; and exerted themselves to supply the defect, both by condemning what was wrong and by performing what was right. No favorite prepossessions, no inveterate habits, either appalled their courage or paralyzed their efforts. According to their knowledge they cheerfully sacrificed whatever is contrary to the simple and spiritual ordinations of their Lord. Accompanied herein with his blessing, they were eminently successful, and have left us an example which it is our glory to imitate. And we are to imitate it by comparing with the scriptural pattern that branch

of the church to which we belong, that we may discover whether there yet remains aught which needs correction. No opinion can be more dishonorable or dangerous than this, that reformation being already achieved, we have nothing to do but to tread quietly on in the track of precedent. Godliness is not the nursling of tradition. If we have no better reason for our sentiments and practice than that they were the sentiments and practice of our fathers before us, our religion is not a rational but a mechanical service. Christianity allows no implicit faith, except in the divine testimony. It is not enough that a point of doctrine or worship has the sanction of venerable names and ancient custom: these may command respect, but can neither obligate conscience nor relieve us from the trouble of examining for ourselves, because there is no believing by proxy. Like the Bereans, in whom the gospel excited a spirit of noble inquiry, we are to *search the scriptures* for the warrant both of our religious profession and our religious observances. We are charged to PROVE *all things, and to* HOLD FAST *that which is good.* The charge embraces not merely such things as we have not hitherto adopted, but whatever we already possess. "Try ALL," saith the Holy Ghost, "hold fast that which abides the trial, and let go the rest." As we shall answer, then, to our

Master in heaven, we are bound to review our religious order and usages; and if we shall find them in any particular at variance with his appointments, thankfully to own our mistake and faithfully to amend it. No plea can justify our refusal; for whatever purity we may really enjoy, none of us have the vanity to claim an exemption from error, nor to suppose that the furnace of the sanctuary can detect no dross in our gold. A church may in her leading characters be sound and evangelical, and yet in some parts of her conduct go exceedingly astray.

The duty now recommended appears to be peculiarly seasonable and urgent.

1. We profess to be Jehovah's witnesses; to maintain his truths against corruption; and for this end to keep up a distinct communion. If we expect our testimony to make a desirable impression upon others, we should ascertain whether we ought not to begin with reformation at home. It will be superlative happiness, indeed, if we be able, after the conscientious discharge of this duty, to lift up our heads and say, we are clean. Let us not be too confident that such would be the issue; for,

2. A number of ourselves more than suspect, that, in one of the most interesting parts of public worship, we have deviated far from propriety. They see in our commemorations of the Re-

DEEMER'S DEATH neither that *frequency* nor *simplicity* which were the delight and the ornament of primitive churches. In their estimation, the supper of the Lord is treated with a neglect which we would tremble to show towards any other of his institutions. Instead of pressing to it through every difficulty and with holy joy, we approach it in general as seldom as can at all consist with the decency of Christian profession. *Once* in *twelve* months, or *once* in *six*, is commonly deemed a sufficient remembrance of him "who loved us and gave himself for us."

They see, moreover, our sacramental feasts loaded with incumbrances for which they cannot discover any scriptural warrant, and that to these incumbrances is owing in a great measure the evil of which they complain.

These things they deplore: they are deeply convinced that the authority of the Lord Jesus; the purity of his ordinances; the very design of the holy supper; and the good of languishing Zion, require a speedy and an effectual remedy.

On this momentous topic do the following letters, brethren, address you. They are intended to urge the great duty of frequent communicating—to sift the objections by which it is opposed—and to place in the light of truth some of those observances which obtain among us. However unworthy of their subject, they claim

attention for their subject's sake. In the boldness of the gospel, they not only solicit but *demand* an impartial hearing. You owe it to yourselves, to the truth, to God. You owe it likewise to your brethren, who, against the torrent of prejudice, have adventured to put more marked honor upon the blessed Jesus by more frequent, and, as they conceive, more evangelical commemorations of his love, than have been usual. And if it shall appear that they are right; that we have been criminally remiss in celebrating that death which is the spring of every living hope; that all apologies for our neglect are lighter than vanity; and that any of our customs want the approbation of the Holy Ghost, and really stand in the way of our obedience; the question will be decided with all who love Jesus Christ more than fashion, and they will unite in a reform as general as it will be glorious.

LETTER II.

Frequent communion an indispensable duty.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

OUR obligation to keep the sacramental feast, is the dying command of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. *I have received of the Lord*, saith the apostle Paul, *that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me." After the same manner also, he took the cup when he had supped, saying, "This cup is the New Testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death till he come."*

This institute, being drawn up with some latitude, does not ascertain precisely, *how* often the supper is to be celebrated. Something is, no doubt, committed to Christian prudence. The

situation of a church, or of her members, may occasionally render communicating inexpedient, or even impracticable. By not restricting it to certain pèriods, which it would then be clearly sinful to omit, Christ has preserved his people from the embarrassments which incidental hindrances would otherwise have created.

But in providing for lawful impediment, he has given no sanction to carelessness. It would be a strange inference from the words of the apostle, and a profligate abuse of gospel liberty, to conclude, that, as the Lord hath prescribed no *stated times* of communicating, we may innocently abstain as often and as long as we please. Some, indeed, appear to act upon this notion. Whether they communicate twice in a year, or once; or only every other year, is to them indifferent. But whoever justifies this irregularity from the indefinite terms of the institution, ought to reflect, that the same apology will justify a professor who should communicate but once in his whole life. With such carnal sophists, however, I have nothing to do. The real disciple who loves his Master, will not permit himself to shuffle. He will candidly confess, that the very phraseology of the text implies *frequency*. The words *as often*, occurring twice in two lines, can signify nothing less, if they signify any thing at all. Whence it follows, that

frequent communicating is positively enjoined; and, consequently, that infrequent communion is a violation of the commandment which the Savior delivered with his departing breath.

It may be asked, how are we to mark, in this case, the limit between duty and sin? Where does the one terminate, and the other commence? I answer, that the indefiniteness of the command will obviate the difficulty on the one hand; and fervent love to Christ, on the other. There is little wisdom, and less tenderness, in anxiety to tread as near to forbidden ground as we possibly can, without crossing the boundary. This is perilous casuistry, as many of the godly have found to their cost. In an hour of worldly prudence, they have made experiments, with great safety, as they thought; but which issued in agony of conscience, and a broken heart. On the subject before us, as well as on every other which is liable to doubts, spiritual caution will teach us to remove from danger. But wherever the line be drawn, it is pretty evident that our ordinary practice lies far on the wrong side. Considering the *place* which the supper holds in the Christian life, and the *ease* with which it may be celebrated; it is a satire on language to call yearly or half-yearly communions, *frequent*. Every believer's heart will tell him so. And here, while meditating on the command *often* to

show forth the Lord's death, he is entreated to ponder a few considerations which ought to awaken sensibility, and to influence conduct.

Although it cannot be disputed, that the very words of institution require frequent communion, yet their emphasis is mostly overlooked. An accurate inspection will convince us that they are more happily adapted to the nature and ends of the ordinance, than any other mode of expression; and contain an argument which should thrill our very souls. They hold out the memorial of Emmanuel's death, as a *test* not merely of *obedience*, but of *love;* and the *frequency* of our acts of obedience as the *measure* of our love. *This do in remembrance of* ME: *For* AS OFTEN *as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup,* YE DO SHOW FORTH THE LORD'S DEATH. As if he had said, "In this bread and wine, O my people, I leave you my memorial. Here is the symbol of my broken body, and here of my streaming blood. In my deepest sorrows you were not forgotten by me; and I require you to keep this feast as a proof that I am not forgotten by you. Realize, O my people, that it is YOUR LORD'S DEATH which ye show forth *every time* you eat this bread and drink this wine. As ye love me, I charge you; as I have loved you, I charge you; THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME."

Say, then, O thou whom JESUS hath delivered from the wrath to come, doth he not here fix a standard of thy gratitude to his grace? If thou art in this manner to testify thy remembrance of him, wilt thou not do it oftener, the more thou rememberest him? If this is the mean by which thou art to show forth his death, will not thy use of it be regulated by thy sense of thine obligations to his death? And does not the tenor of this command teach thee, that the *frequency* of thy sacramental commemorations of him will be proportioned to the *ardor* of thy love? Alas, brethren, if *this* is a criterion of love to our Lord, the pretensions of most of us are low indeed.

That the foregoing view of the Redeemer's precept is not erroneous, will be evident from a delineation of the principal features of his supper.

1. The sacrament of the supper is *an important part of our practical testimony to the cross.* This holy ordinance contributes as much, if not more than any other, to keep alive in the earth the memory of that sacrifice which, through the eternal SPIRIT, our High Priest offered up unto God. In a powerful appeal to the senses, it arrests attention, and strikes with awe, while the scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary pass along in symbolical review. In this holy ordi-

nance, we proclaim to the surrounding spectators, that we are not ashamed to confess the despised JESUS before a crooked and perverse generation. We proclaim to the carnal world, that we have renounced their master, their idols, their hope; and have "avouched the LORD to be our God." We cry with the apostle, "God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our LORD JESUS CHRIST." This, indeed, is the only ordinance in which, *as* believers, we make a public, social, and separate confession of his name. In other services of the sanctuary, we are mingled with the crowd: our profession, though public and social, is not *separate*, and does not distinguish us from others. In the worship of a godly family at home, it is, indeed, social and separate, but not *public*. In holy baptism, it is separate, and public, but not *social*, or at most very imperfectly so. It is only in the supper of the Lord, that these three characters of the church's practical confession completely unite. One humble commemoration of his death is a better testimony to his grace, and sinks a deeper conviction into the breasts of the profane, than years of empty profession, or angry controversy.

2. The supper is *an affecting representation of the communion which believers have with* CHRIST JESUS.

They appear at the sacramental table as members of a family of whom CHRIST is the head: the federal head by *legal*, and the spiritual head by *vital* union. This double relation establishes between them and their Lord a *common interest*, which is recognized and sealed in the holy supper. On the one hand, they, in worthily receiving the symbols of his body and blood, receive him by faith as a crucified Savior, vow adherence to his cause, and claim the right of communicants in the benefits of his covenant. On the other hand, he accepts the vow and admits the claim, divinely sanctioning their title to all the blessings which he hath to confer. The peace of God, which passeth understanding; access to him as a reconciled Father; grace to help in every time of need; in a word, life, light, strength, consolation, victory; his presence, his Spirit, his fullness, his kingdom, his glory—all these he owns to be their portion; all these he promises to give them. So that the sacramental seal of their being "planted together in the likeness of his death," bespeaks, at the same time, the preparation and earnest of their being "planted also in the likeness of his resurrection."

3. The supper exhibits the *union and communion of believers with each other* in CHRIST.

They are citizens of the New Jerusalem, enjoying equal privileges under a common charter

—children of the same family, sitting down to a feast provided by paternal love. They do "all eat the same spiritual meat, and do all drink the same spiritual drink." If there is aught in religion to make them feel that "they being many are *one* body;" that they are the purchase of the same blood, and monuments of the same grace; that they are combating in a common warfare, are partakers of a common salvation, and heirs of a common inheritance; that they have one faith, one calling, one hope;—it is the communion of the body and blood of the Lord. Thrice blessed ordinance! which clothes spiritual principle with visible form, and repeats to the senses what the scripture hath solemnly addressed to the heart, that in the nations of the saved *there is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female; for they are all* ONE *in Christ Jesus.*

4. The death of Christ, commemorated in the supper, *is the point in which the leading doctrines of redemption concentrate their rays, and where they shine with united lustre.*

Draw nigh, O Christian, and by faith contemplate in the cross of Jesus the *infinite evil of sin.* Nothing less than a sacrifice of infinite value can procure its pardon. To expiate its guilt, God manifested in the flesh becomes a curse; to wash away its stain, his precious

blood is poured out. See in the agonies of Him who is JEHOVAH'S fellow; see in the sword of vengeance that cleaves his heart the accursed sinfulness of the sin which thou hast committed; and which, without his interposition, would have sunk thee forever into the lowest hell!

Draw nigh, and contemplate the rigors of Jehovah's justice in the *punishment* of sin.

He hath sworn in his holiness, and by many infallible signs he hath demonstrated, that it shall not escape. The waters of his flood have swept from the earth a whole generation of rebels. Fire from heaven consumed the sinners of Sodom. Sword, and famine, and pestilence, have repeatedly avenged his quarrel. Nay, "the damnation of hell" is prepared for apostate angels and the impenitent among men. But neither the flood of waters nor the flood of fire; nor famine, nor pestilence, nor sword; nor that everlasting destruction from his presence; no, not even hell with all its terrors; not any of these, not all of them combined, ascertain so dreadfully Jehovah's determination to punish sin, as his "not sparing his own Son." Oh how should *we* have supported the weight of that wrath, which bowed down to the earth and laid low in death the WORD incarnate!

Draw nigh, and contemplate *the riches of the Father's grace in our salvation.*

Apostates from his favor and rebels against his government, we were objects of his just and sore displeasure. Without the least impeachment of his righteousness, he might have sworn in his wrath that we should never enter into his rest. But in the multitude of his mercies he provides for us, even for *us*, a ransom that delivers from going down into the pit. *God* so *loved* —how mighty the emphasis!—so *loved the world, that he* GAVE—not an angel, nor a host of angels —but *his* ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, *that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

Draw nigh, and contemplate *the love of* CHRIST —a love without parallel, and beyond comprehension. *Though he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.* Source of eternal wonder! Lo "the Creator of the ends of the earth" descends into a tabernacle of flesh, and sojourns among men! And whence, blessed Lord, whence this condescension? It was for "the good of his chosen." He assumed their nature that he might occupy their place; might take their guilt; might become *a curse for them that they might be made the rightcousness of God in him.* Yes, dear Christian, he put his soul in *thy* soul's

stead; he drank *for thee* the cup of trembling; it was *thy* guilt which nailed him to the ignominious tree; *thy* guilt which rolled the billows of wrath in upon his sinless soul. It was in bearing *thine iniquity* that hell's blackest midnight thickened upon his spirit, and wrung from him that agonizing cry, MY GOD, MY GOD, *why hast* THOU *forsaken me?* Hath he passed through the fires of the pit to *save* thee? and doth he "stake all the glories of his crown to *keep* thee?" and wilt thou, canst thou, darest thou be backward in promoting the frequent commemoration of his love? O Savior, if we forget thee, let our right hand forget her cunning!

Draw nigh once more, and contemplate *the harmony of the divine attributes in the recovery of sinners.*

In this astonishing death, *mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other.* While the blood of expiation flows, and fire from above consumes the sacrifice, a cloud of incense, rising up from the altar, announces at the throne of God an offering of a sweet-smelling savor. Now *God can be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.* Into this plan of grace and truth the angels desire to look. They see, with admiration, the prince of this world cast out; his prey torn from his hands; his kingdom of darkness rent

to its foundation. They see God's threatening fulfilled; his government exalted; transgression punished; and yet his name glorified in the salvation of the transgressor. JUSTICE, appeased, puts up her sword, while MERCY lifts the wretch from the abyss of his pollutions and his crimes. *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!* Yea, *it* BECAME *him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*

These are considerations which render the death of Christ infinitely interesting to a believer, on which he cannot meditate too often nor too intensely. The very life of his soul lies in experiencing their power. The more his faith is exercised upon them, the more will he imbibe of their virtue, and be conformed to his crucified Head. In proportion, then, as it is his duty to be under the influence of those evangelical principles which a sanctified view of the death of Christ begets and cherishes, it is also his duty to be engaged in the frequent commemorations of his death. And hence I add, that

As the death of the Lord Jesus is thus inseparably connected with the great *doctrines* of godliness, so, in the

5. Place, it hath a *mighty efficacy in quickening the graces and mortifying the corruptions of believers.*

Those who are best acquainted with themselves, know that nothing but communion with Christ in his death can conquer their depravity. Their old man is *crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth they should not serve sin.* Let them declare *when* it is that sin, in every shape, is most detestable in their eyes; *when* their desires for perfect deliverance from it are most ardent; *when* the emotions of lust expire within them. Is it not when they obtain a commanding view of their Lord Jesus, *as bearing their sins in his own body on the tree?* Yes, *one* believing glimpse of Christ crucified does infinitely more in "subduing their iniquities," than all their resolutions, their watchfulness, their struggles, without it. Let them declare, also, *when* the adversary gets the advantage over them; *when* the "law in their members, warring against the law of their mind, brings them" most easily "into captivity to the law of sin and death;" is it not when their views of his cross are beclouded, and "faith in his blood" enfeebled?

On the other hand, *when* is every holy grace most lively and flourishing? If "the peace of God rule in their hearts," and his love be "shed

abroad therein by the Holy Ghost"—if they be "clothed with humility"—if "patience have her perfect work"—if hope tower, and faith triumph, and love to the brethren glow—if, trampling on this miserable world, they "set their affections on things above," and "press towards the mark for the prize of their high calling of God in Christ Jesus;" it is because they are "crucified with Christ;" it is in *bearing about in the body the dying of the* Lord Jesus, *that the life also of Jesus is made manifest in their mortal flesh.* If such, then, is the connection between the cross of Christ and the life of faith; if such its influence on a believer's peace, and holiness, and comfort, and preparation for "an abundant entrance into the kingdom" of his Father; how important the duty of retaining the spiritual impressions of it! how strong the necessity of frequent and *very* frequent recurrence to that ordinance which is destined to recall it afresh to our memories, and which, by sensible tokens, so evidently sets forth Christ crucified!

6. In the holy supper believers are often admitted to *near intercourse with the* God *of the spirits of all flesh.*

Communion is one of the most prominent features of the ordinance. *The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is*

it not the communion of the body of Christ? It is here seen that the fellowship of believers *is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.* And *here* the Lord not only attests its *reality*, but is often pleased to give them a sweet and powerful *sense* of it. Covered with celestial food, food such as angels never tasted, how often has the sacramental table been to the children of promise a scene of delight ineffable! The kind invitation, *Eat, O friends! drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!* hath thrilled their very souls. They can well remember how bountifully their God hath dealt with them, while they were endeavoring to honor him by showing forth the death of his Son. They came hungry, and he hath set them down to *a feast of fat things*, and hath *satisfied them with the goodness of his house, even of his holy place.* They came disconsolate, and he hath *given them beauty for ashes; the oil of joy for mourning; the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.* They came with feeble and with fainting steps, and he hath *strengthened them with might by his Spirit in the inner man.* They came bowed down under the weight of the body of death, and groaning beneath the oppressions of unbelief, and he hath "removed the burden from their shoulders." The spirit of bondage hath fled before the spirit of adoption: *Abba, Father!*

was their gracious aspiration. In the liberty of the gospel they have cried out, *O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant; thou hast loosed my bonds!* In a word, he hath disappointed all their apprehensions: he hath dried up their tears; hath stilled the inward tumult; hath dissipated their darkness; hath poured his consolations into their hearts; hath enabled them to "enter with boldness into the holiest by the blood of Jesus;" caused them to "see his power and his glory; sealed them up by the Holy Ghost unto the day of redemption," and sent them away encompassed with these "songs of salvation:" *Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee: thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits! who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

This, indeed, hath not been the happiness of *every* believer; nor is it always the happiness of *any* believer. But it certainly hath been, and yet is often enjoyed at the table of the Lord: perhaps more often, proportionably, than in any

other exercise. And this, not because it is in itself more holy than the rest, or because access to God therein is in itself more near; but he will put a special honor upon it and upon them who love it, because it is that ordinance, which, in a special manner, puts honor upon his Son Jesus.

And now, Christian, interrogate thine own heart. Say, as in the sight of thy Beloved, is it not thy duty and thy privilege *often* to keep the feast in remembrance of him? Wilt thou refuse to display before the world a bold and generous testimony for his name? Is it to thee unprofitable or unpleasant to recognize, at short intervals, thy union and communion with him and in him with all the household of faith? Art thou in danger of entertaining, from the frequent commemoration of his death, too deep an abhorrence for sin? Of realizing, too sensibly, its eternal opposition to Jehovah's purity? Of esteeming too highly his pardoning grace? Of being unduly affected with the love of Jesus? Of admiring to excess that holy plan by which God is infinitely magnified; and thou hast escaped the wrath to come? Canst thou not find frequent employment for a *sanctifying* Savior? Hast thou no lust to subdue? no grace to quicken? no mercy to ask? Hast thou won the crown? all thine adversaries slain, and all thy conflicts

over? Art thou indifferent about meeting with thy God? Are his consolations small with thee? or the light of his countenance a thing of nought? But why rend thy bosom with questions like these? No believer can think thus. And can he apologize to his own conscience? can he apologize to his Lord for infrequent, very infrequent, attendance upon that ordinance in which his self and all the benefits of his covenant are represented, sealed, and applied? Did he intend, suppose ye, that this memorial of his death should be thrust into a corner of the year? Or could they who heard the tender and piercing words, *This do in remembrance of me*, have believed that any who love his name would treat it with such indignity? No; never, never! Were Paul to rise from his rest and to visit our churches, one of the first things he would miss is the communion-table. What would be our confusion, should he address us in inquiries like these: "How often do you remember your Redeemer in the sacramental feast? every sabbath? every other sabbath? every third sabbath? every month?" Alas! no. This was never heard or thought of among us. "How often, then?" Oh! I feel the rising blush—but the shameful truth must come out: "Generally, not more than twice in the year." What astonishment would seize the apostle! He would

hardly own us for disciples. Is this, Christian brethren, our kindness to our Friend? This our reverence for his injunction, our return for his love? We are verily guilty concerning our Brother. It becomes us to rouse from our lethargy; to throw ourselves abashed at his feet; to implore his forgiveness; to evince our sincerity by correcting our fault; and no longer disobey him and forsake our own mercies.

LETTER III.

Objections answered—Innovation.

Christian Brethren,

The duty of frequent communion is so undeniable, and the argument by which it is enforced appeals with such power to every gracious principle, that there seems no room for objection. But objections are made; and by those too, who, we must hope, desire to walk in all the commandments of the Lord blameless. Experience teaches us, that prejudice, even in upright minds, is sufficient to obscure the most luminous truths, and to magnify the most trifling difficulty into an impassable mountain. I shall, therefore, attempt to obviate those objections which appear, from their popularity, to be thought most important.

I. It is said that the measure proposed *would innovate upon the established order of the church.*

To this I reply, that if it be, *indeed*, an innovation, and if, as it hath been proved, it is nevertheless our *duty*, then it is high time the innova-

vation were made, and the habits of *old* transgression removed. Let not the terror of an ill-sounding epithet defeat a needful and scriptural alteration. The cry of innovation is no proof that a measure is not both lawful and wise. It was raised by the prelatists against our venerable ancestors; by the apostates of Rome against the illustrious reformers; by the scribes and Pharisees against Christ himself. But happily the fact is otherwise. Frequent communion is *not* an innovation. The odium of this charge lies upon our present practice. Many consider as a part of the good way, whatever is older than theirselves. But when we speak of innovation in the church of Christ, we are not to inquire merely what was done by our fathers, or grandfathers, or their sires: but what was the order of the church *from the beginning?* How did Christ ordain? How did his apostles conduct? In what state did *they* leave the church? Now it is notorious, that during the first three centuries of the Christian era, communions were held with a frequency of which, among us, we have neither example nor resemblance. It is also notorious, that the original frequency of communions declined as carnality and corruption gained ground: and it is no less notorious, that it has been urged

as a weighty duty, by the best of men, and the best of churches, in the best of times.

A brief illustration of these points, may not be unacceptable to the reader—

As to the *first;* it is demonstrable, that among the primitive Christians, the celebration of the supper was a part of the *ordinary sanctification of the Lord's day.*

To begin with the apostles. We learn from Acts xx. 7, that *on the first day of the week—the disciples came together to break bread.* Hence it is evident, not only that Christians assembled on the Lord's day for public worship, but that they did not part without commemorating his death. What else can be meant by *breaking of bread?* It is a phrase, borrowed from Christ himself, to signify the communion of the supper. And most assuredly his people did not assemble on his day for any common or carnal purposes. Nay, it is intimated that sacramental communion was a *principal,* if not *the* principal object of their meeting. Prayer, praise, and preaching of the word, were, doubtless, their stated exercises; but of such moment was the supper considered, that in recording their employment on the sabbath, the sacred historian mentions nothing else —they came together *to break bread.* The argument must be decisive with all who alledge this place to prove that the apostolic churches sanc-

tified the first, instead of the seventh day of the week. For the historian does not more positively say that they *came together*, than that they came together *to break bread.* Indeed the strength of the argument, drawn from this passage, to prove the change of the sabbath, lies in the supposition that this "breaking of bread" signifies the sacrament of the supper; because it is the only expression from which we gather that the meeting of the disciples was both a *stated* one, and for *religious* ends. It is plain that they were not called together to hear the apostle preach; but that he preached to them on the first day of the week, because they then came together, of course, *to break bread:* for he arrived at Troas the Monday preceding; and instead of assembling them, as he might easily have done, he appears to have *waited six days*, that he might meet them on the *seventh*, which was the Lord's day. And designing to depart on the morrow, or Monday, he was so pressed for time that he protracted his sermon till midnight. All which difficulty he would have avoided by summoning the church in the foregoing week; but he chose rather to undergo it, than not give his apostolical sanction to the sanctification of the Lord's day, or lose the pleasure of joining with the brethren in commemorating his death. You must, therefore,

admit either that this celebrated passage* contains no proof that the primitive Christians *habitually* sanctified the Lord's day; or that *weekly communions* were their constant practice.

To the same purpose is the testimony of Paul. 1 Cor. xi. 20. He had reproved the Corinthians for their scandalous dissensions in the place, and at the time of public worship. *You come together*, says he, *not for the better, but for the worse. For when ye come together* IN THE CHURCH, *I hear that there be divisions* (schisms) *among you.* Ver. 17. 18. That these "schisms" occurred in their indecent manner of communicating is undeniable. For, with reference to them the apostle proceeds, v. 20. *When ye come together, therefore, into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.* "By your shameful behavior, the ordinance is so prostituted that it resembles nothing less than the supper of the Lord." The apostle tells us, that their irregularities happened, *when they came together in the church*, and that the scene of them was the *table of the Lord.* Whence it follows, that the celebration of the supper was a regular concomitant of their stated meetings for public worship; and these, we know, were held at least *every Lord's day.* The conclusion

* Its true meaning, and the strong argument which it affords for the change of the sabbath, are ably stated in that learned work, entitled, *Sabbatum redivivum*, part ii. p. 517—520.

results necessarily from the tenor of the apostle's argument, "which evidently supposes, that whenever they assembled together, they came to eat the Lord's supper; for otherwise their coming together so as not to eat the Lord's supper, would be no proof that their coming together was for the worse."*

Weekly communions did not die with the apostles and their contemporaries. There is a cloud of witnesses to testify that they were kept up, by succeeding Christians, with great care and tenderness, for above two centuries. It is not necessary to swell these pages with quotations. The fact is indisputable.† It was even common to communicate *three and four times* a week, and in some place *every day*. Communion every Lord's day, however, was universal; and was preserved in the Greek church till the *seventh* century; "and such as neglected *three weeks* together were excommunicated."‡

In this manner did the spirit of ancient piety cherish the memory of a Savior's love. There

* Erskine's *Theological Dissertations*, p. 262.

† Plin. *Epist.* lib. 10. ep. 97. p. 724. ed. Veenhusii. Just. Martyr. Apol. 2da. opp. p. 98. D. *Paris.* 1636. Tertull. de orat. p. 135, 136. ed. Rigaltii.—Whoever wishes to see these, and numerous other testimonies to the same effect, cited at large, may consult Erskine's *Dissertation on frequent communicating;* and especially Bingham's *Origines Ecclesiasticæ*, Book xv. Chap. ii. where a multitude of authorities are collected and elucidated.

‡ Erskine's *Dissertations*, p. 271.

was no need of reproof, remonstrance, or entreaty. No trifling excuses for neglect were ever heard from the lips of a Christian; for *such* a neglect had not yet degraded the Christian's name. He carried in his own bosom sufficient inducements to obey, without reluctance, the precept of his Lord. It was his choice, his consolation, his joy. These were days of life and glory; but days of dishonor and death were shortly to succeed; nor was there a more ominous symptom of their approach, than the decline of frequent communicating. For as the power of religion appears in a solicitude to magnify the Lord Jesus continually; so the decay of it is first detected by the encroachments of indifference. It was in the *fourth* century, that the church began very discernibly to forsake her first love. The ardor of primitive zeal gave way to a cold formality, and the supper of the Lord, sooner perhaps than any other institution, fell a prey to its malignant influence. "About the year 324, it was decreed at a council held at Illiberis, in Spain, that no offerings should be received from such as did not receive the Lord's supper:* which shows that some, who called themselves Christians, were beginning to neglect the dying command of their professed Lord."

* Concil. Illiberit. can. 28.

"About the year 341, a council at Antioch decreed, that all who came to church, and heard the scriptures read, but afterwards joined not in prayer and receiving the sacrament, should be cast out of the church, till such time as they gave public proof of their repentance."*

"Towards *the close of the fourth century*, men grew more and more cold and indifferent about the Lord's supper; so that the eloquent Chrysostom complains, 'In vain we stand at the altar; none care to receive.' "†

"At length, communicating weekly, or even monthly, begins to appear burdensome. The greater part received the sacrament only three times a year; and some not so often. This occasioned the council of Agde, or Agatha, in Languedoc, met in the year 506, to decree, that none should be esteemed good Christians who did not communicate, at least, at the *three* great festivals, Christmas, Easter, and Whitsunday :‡ and, accordingly, from that time forward, those of the church of Rome esteemed themselves, in so far, good enough Christians, if they communicated thrice a year; and that it was presumption to receive oftener."§ And, mark it well, reader; their sense of the necessity of frequent

* Concil. Antioch. can. 2. ‡ Chrysost. Hom. III. in Ephes.
‡ Concil. Agath. can. 18.
§ Erskine's *Dissertations*, p. 267, 268, 271.

communions decreased, in proportion as they became addicted to *will-worship;* and the superstition of *uncommanded holidays.*

From such an outset, matters proceeded, very naturally, from bad to worse, till the unblushing degeneracy had nearly discarded sacramental communion altogether. The council of Lateran under Pope Innocent III. in 1215; that very council which established the accursed tenet of auricular confession; and the more accursed tenet of transubstantiation, decided a *yearly* communion, at *Easter*, to be sufficient.* The decision was not more unscriptural, than it was crafty and impious. For by removing this sacrament from ordinary view, and connecting it with the pomp of *Easter*, it augmented the artificial devotion of an ignorant and deluded age, and signally promoted the idolatry of the *host.*

* Bingham's *Origines Eccles.* Book xv. ch. ix. 6. Mosheim, vol. iii. p. 250. Fleury, *Histoire Ecclesiastique*, tom. xi. p. 279, 280. 4to. This eminent popish historian, compelled to own that yearly communications were the effect of "the remissness and lukewarmness of Christians," seems himself a little scandalized at the decree of Innocent's council. The only apology which his ingenuity could suggest, is as severe a censure as a protestant would desire. They did nothing more "than *conform to the practice* already tolerated by the church." "Dans l'usage introduit par *le relâchement et la tiedeur* des Chrestiens, la plupart ne communioient plus *qu'une fois l'an*, a Pâques—Ainsi le concile de Latran ne fit—que se conformer a *l'usage deja toleré* par l'eglise." *Ib.* p. 281. i. e. The council only sanctioned "remissness and lukewarmness," out of respect to an *old custom.* Ah Popery!

Here, then, we have traced infrequent communion to its source—the *example*, *traditions*, and *enactions* of apostate Rome. So firmly was this conviction riveted in Calvin's breast, that he scrupled not to term annual communions, *a contrivance of the devil.** The authority of Rome is surely not so venerable, nor her bequests so precious, that we need be over-nice in departing from her precedents. Certain it is, that the best of men and the purest of churches, have been so far from considering frequent communion as a rash and hurtful innovation, that they have both desired and urged it as a most blessed reformation. A few testimonies to this purpose, may be gratifying to the reader.

The excellent Calvin complains, that in his day professors, conceiting they had fully discharged their duty by a single communion, resigned themselves for the rest of the year to supineness and sloth. "It ought to have been," says he, "far otherwise. *Every week*, at least, the table of the Lord should have been spread for Christian assemblies; and the promises de-

* The very words of Calvin are, "And truly, this custom, which enjoins communicating once every year, is *a most evident contrivance of the devil;* by whose instrumentality soever it may have been determined." "Et sane hæc consuetudo quæ semel quotannis communicare jubet, *certissimum est diaboli inventum;* cujuscunque tandem ministerio invecta fuerit." Calvin. *instit.* lib. iv. cap. 17, 46.

clared, by which, in partaking of it, we might be spiritually fed."

Entirely with Calvin agrees his cotemporary, that able defender of the reformation, Martin Chemnitz. He closes a series of judicious remarks with the following strong expression: "they are neither true nor faithful ministers of Christ, who, *by any means whatever*, either lead away or deter the people from the *frequent* use of sacramental communion." And what he understood by *frequency* is clear from the very next words, in which he feelingly extols the "most *lovely examples* of genuine antiquity."

The admirable Witsius, after a short detail of the original frequency of communicating, and of its decline with the "increase of numbers and the decrease of zeal," exclaims, "Alas! how far are we at this day from the sanctity and zeal of the ancients?" It is true, he was not without apprehension, that, in a general corruption of manners, a too great frequency might depreciate the ordinance. There was little reason, as we shall shortly see, for the good man's fear, and less for his precaution. Modern Christianity is in no danger of running into an extreme by emulating, on this subject, the ardor of an apostle.

Calderwood, in his elaborate controversy with the prelatists, lays the blame of infrequent com-

munion on the want of zeal and love which throws us so far behind the primitive church, but insists that this should be no obstacle to its restoration.

Had I intended, or did the limits of this discussion permit, it would be easy to adduce on the same side of the question a long list of illustrious names, not more graceful to my page than savory to the church of Christ. The general sentiment of those who have thought most profoundly as well as piously on the subject, accords perfectly with the preceding. Nor is it the sentiment of individuals merely; it hath been expressed in the most solemn manner by the purest churches of the reformation.

The constitution of the Belgic or Dutch church of 1581 appointed the supper to be celebrated *every other month.**

The discipline of the Reformed churches of France, after noticing that it had not been usual with them to celebrate the holy supper oftener than *four times* a year, recommends a *greater frequency;* (the due respect being preserved,) that believers, treading in the footsteps of the primitive church, may be exercised, *and may increase in faith* by the *frequent use of the sacraments.*†

* Voetii *disputat.* tom. iv. p. 761.

† Bien qu'on n'ait pas accoûtumé de celebrer dans nos Eglises la sainte Cene, plus souvent que *quatre fois l'an;* toutefois il

The church of Scotland, at her first reformation, insisted upon *four* communions in the year;* and there is every probability that she would have gone farther, but from an opinion that the people, just emerging from the darkness and bondage of popery, were unable to bear it. This conjecture is founded upon what actually took place at the modeling of that plan of doctrine, worship, &c. by the Westminster Assembly, which united in one most evangelical communion the churches of England, Scotland, and Ireland. The directory for public worship prescribes the frequent celebration of the Lord's supper: nay, it supposes that it should be *so* frequent as to supersede the necessity even of a *previous intimation.* "Where this sacrament cannot with convenience be *frequently* administered, it is requisite that public warning be given the sabbath day before the administration there-

seroit *bien a desirer*, qu'elle se celebrast *plus souvent*, le respect qui y est requis etant gardé; parceque il est très utile que le peuple fidele soit exercé, et qu'il *croisse en la foi*, par l'usage *frequent des sacramens*, comme aussi l'exemple de l'eglise primitive nous y convie. *Discipline des Eglises Reformeés*, chap. xii. 14. On this canon, Mr. L'Arroque observes, that at the synod of Orleans, in 1562, a minister of *Picardy*, who used to celebrate the supper *every month*, was advised to follow the custom of the other churches, merely for the sake of uniformity. It seems, however, that they had thought better of the matter, as the canon in its present form was drawn up by the synod of Paris in 1565. L'Arroque, *Defence de la Discipline des Eglises Reformées de France*, p. 290. 4to.

* 1st *Book of Discipline*, Art. XIII.

of." *How* often should it be administered to render this warning needless? Let this question be pondered by those who think semi-annual communions sufficient; yet that very directory have we adopted and affect to admire. Alas! what a flagrant contradiction between our profession and practice!

As an instructive comment on this part of the directory, it may be added, that several of the ministers who assisted in its compilation, and a great part of those who were ejected in the time of Charles II. for non-conformity, are *certainly known* to have celebrated the holy supper every month in their own congregations.* Before this, in the days of Laud's corruption and tyranny, those eminent men of God, Mr. Robert Blair and Mr. Cunningham of Holywood, made such mutual arrangements as afforded their people opportunities of communicating *eight* times in the year.†

The foregoing facts will convince every honest inquirer, that frequent communion is not an *innovation*. It will be hard, indeed, if the combined suffrages of apostles and reformers, of the best of men and the purest of churches, cannot wipe off the imputation. But it attaches, with an indelible stain, to our existing custom, which

* Erskine's *Dissertations*, p. 274.
† Erskine, p. 279.

can boast of no such authority. This, which we are so afraid of altering, is a real innovation on Christian order, and an unhappy desertion of Christian principle. If innovation is, *in truth*, our abhorrence, let us endeavor to get out of its labyrinth; and, retracing our wandering steps, let us return to the *old way* in which the first confessors of the cross have walked before us, and where we may expect to find much rest unto our souls.

LETTER IV.

The subject continued—Irreverence—Want of Preparation.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

ATTEMPTS to restore frequent communion have been charged, not only with innovation, but with *disrespect* to the ordinance of the supper: for it is objected,

II. That "by rendering the duty *too common*, it would deaden affection, destroy solemnity, banish reverence, and thus be injurious to the religion which it is designed to aid."

That such an objection should be made by a formalist, who goes to the communion-table once or twice a year to save appearances, or to quiet conscience, is nothing strange. But that it should ever be proposed by a living Christian is truly astonishing.

On what is it, on what *can* it be founded? Is it countenanced by the word of God, by the nature of the exercise, or by the experience of be-

lievers? Did Jesus, when he said, *This do in remembrance of me*, caution us not to do it too frequently, lest we should lose our veneration? Did he bid us to show our reverence to his institution by trampling on his command? or our gratitude for his love by slighting his memorial? The same objection was made by some at the reformation, and was treated with the utmost indignation. *A wonderful reverence, truly, for the sacrament*, cries Bucer, *by which it is contemned, and the saving communion therein offered with the Son of God rejected!** But let us appeal to *fact*. Do *other* duties grow contemptible by their frequency? Is the *sabbath* vile because of its weekly return? Are the divine scriptures, is family religion, are secret and ejaculatory prayer, insipid to those who are most conversant with them? *Pray without ceasing*, saith the Holy Ghost. "Pray but *seldom*," replies the objection we are combating; "You will be too bold and familiar with holy things if you often meddle with them. Frequent prayer will end in profaning the presence of God, because it will diminish your sense of his majesty." How does this language sound in pious ears? The heart of a believer revolts: his blood runs cold. The

* Mira sanè sacramenti reverentia, qua *contemnitur*, et salvisica in eo oblata filii Dei communicatio repudiatur! apud CALDERWOOD in *Altar. Damasc.* p. 536.

testimony in his own breast refutes, as he goes along, these impious suggestions. And can any man conceive why frequent prayer, meditation, &c., should promote the spiritual life, and frequent communicating hinder it? Will increased faith produce unbelief, or renewed love indifference? Will melting views of divine grace harden the heart, or a commanding sense of the divine glory generate pride? Will "fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" abate heavenly mindedness, or the sealing of the Spirit of promise nurture carnal confidence? Oh!—tell it not in Gath! Let not the rumor reach an uncircumcised ear, that believers in Jesus, who profess to love him supremely, proclaim his excellence to others, and declare that the more they know and enjoy of him, the more they desire to know and to enjoy—that even believers in Jesus, when invited to frequent an ordinance which he hath left as a seal of their covenant-mercies, a mean of intercourse with himself, a pledge of his eternal kingdom, should not only *refuse*, but *justify* their refusal, by pleading that it would—*diminish their reverence!!*

No, Christian reader; carelessness and carnality keep pace with neglect. The new man is deprived of his food, while the old man, "corrupt according to the deceitful lusts," gains strength, and thus aversion from duty is doubled

with remissness. This is a lesson of universal experience. Never were there more devout, and humble, and reverential communions, than in the days of primitive purity. No where, at this hour, do they more deeply interest pious affection, or exert a benigner influence, than where they most resemble, both in frequency and simplicity, the apostolic pattern.

III. It is objected, that "very frequent communicating is unfriendly to suitable preparation, as we could not always afford the time necessary to be spent in it."

Far, infinitely far, be it from me to encourage levity or sloth in a service so spiritual. Wo to him whose profane approach makes him "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." But in many, there is reason to fear, the objection arises from no such scruple. It cannot but be a favorite with those, who, "having the form of godliness without the power," find it useful in palliating their inattention to a duty which they secretly hate, and from which they would gladly be exempted. Miserable men! They need preparation indeed, but such as they will never acquire by the farce of "hanging down their heads like a bulrush," and assuming once in six months, or once in twelve, the austerity of a monk, and the precision of a Pharisee; while,

during the rest of the year, they sacrifice at the shrine of mammon or of lust.

In what, however, does preparation for the table of the Lord consist? In a multitude of outward performances? In devoting a great part of the preceding week to various exercises of public worship? Alas! all this may be done, and the heart remain as unprepared as ever. The religionist, who, besides giving tithes of all that he possessed, *fasted twice in the week*, was not thereby fitted for communion with his Maker. One hour, one minute, of genuine humiliation before God—one tear of gracious contrition for sin—one groan unutterable of the spirit of adoption, is of more value in his sight than the most splendid round of formalities. If we trample on manifest duty under the notion that by performing it *seldomer* we shall perform it *better*, he will not accept a host of uncommanded offerings as an equivalent for the disobedience. He hath said, *I hate robbery for burnt offering.* "Burnt offering you must bring, but you shall not plunder your neighbor's fold to replenish my altar." Preparation for the holy supper is indispensable. But we may not withhold from our Redeemer the sacramental tribute on pretense, that, when we *do* pay it, we will make up the deficiency by our superior qualification. It is the most perverse of

all perversions to *displace* a duty by *preparing* for it.

But why must so much time be consumed in extraordinary preparation for the Lord's supper as to hinder its frequent celebration? It is said, that "we therein make a *nearer* approach to God than in other duties, and therefore need more cautious and thorough preparation."

This mode of arguing is common; but is it just? Is it scriptural? Let us examine it. Briefly, it amounts to this, that the Lord requires more holiness from us in sacramental than in other services; i. e. allows us to be *less holy* in the latter than in the former. I might excuse myself from saying another word about it: a simple statement is a refutation. But to sift it a little more—is God more holy on sacramental than on other occasions? Is an irreverent mind or a polluted heart less offensive to him on these than on those? Does communicating possess either more inherent or more accidental sanctity than any other act of spiritual worship? Let the living God plead his own cause. He hath said, *I will be sanctified in them that* COME NIGH *me.* Again: *Having boldness*, saith his apostle, *to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus—let us* DRAW NIGH. It will not be disputed that these embrace *every act* of worship. God has, therefore, imprinted the *same* character upon them

all; and as *he* has not discriminated between them on account of their greater or less degree of sacredness, let us beware how *we* do it. He is as jealous of his honor in prayer, in praise, &c., as in communicating. Were we rightly affected, as deep solemnity would rest on our spirits in asking a blessing at our meals, as in breaking the sacramental bread. And it betrays either much ignorance, or much carnality, if a communion-season fill us with awe, while the other offices of piety find us and leave us cold or unconcerned.

I am so far from questioning a believer's sweet and joyous communion with his God in the sacramental feast, that this is one of my principal arguments for its frequent celebration. But that it is, *in itself*, a *nearer* approach to him than others, or that *equal* nearness is not attainable in others, can never be admitted. Such an opinion is neither founded in the scripture nor supported by fact. What is communion with God in the usual acceptation of that phrase? Is it not the reciprocation of love between him and his people? *His* love "shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost;" and *their* love flowing out to him in return? What is *nearness* to God? Is it not a realizing view by faith of his most glorious perfections, accompanied with a sense of his favor as *our* reconciled God in

Christ? And will any pretend that believers may not at times enjoy these privileges as largely in the retirements of the closet, or in the other parts of public worship, as in communicating? Nay, is it not evident, that if you except the social acts of eating and drinking the symbolical bread and wine, the exercises of a communion-table are or ought to be the very same with those which should mark other duties of devotion? Godly sorrow for sin—triumph in the merits and grace of the Lord Jesus—self-dedication to him—appropriation of his covenant-mercies, &c., form the essence of worthy communicating; and they equally form the essence of every other part of acceptable worship. The tenet here opposed is therefore utterly groundless; and it is pernicious also, for it exalts one divine institution at the expense of the rest. And in its operation it may engender idolatrous notions of the supper, but will never promote a sound and evangelical piety.

An habitual frame for any duty to which we may be called, would be our unspeakable happiness. But on our present plan, one communion is forgotten, and its impressions worn out, before the next arrives. A due frequency would bring on a new one, while the favor of the last is yet fresh and cheering. It would foster the spirit of communion-sabbaths, and keep our Lord's

death in a manner always before our eyes. And whether this would not be a more effectual preparative for the sacramental supper, than a crowd of week-day services, let Christians judge.

The last two objections lead to consequences as forbidding as they are natural. If frequency of communion breeds irreverence, then reverence is befriended by infrequent communion. If the former deprives us of leisure for preparation, then the latter must be highly favorable to it. The conclusion, on the whole, is, *the seldomer we communicate, the better:* and we would be far more reverentially impressed, and might be far better prepared, if, instead of twice in one year, the Lord's death were celebrated only once in two years, or once in ten. We should then have abundance of time for every prerequisite. We might have tenfold the present employment, and tenfold the pomp: if a week were too little, we could afford a month; and the supper of the Lord would be immensely honored. Hither the plea which I have been considering, conducts us at last. But, O thou that lovest a crucified Savior, avoid its snare. This smiling vizard conceals a fiend. Beneath this garb of piety lurks a dagger for thy life; and ere thou art aware, it will stab thee to the heart, and put thy Redeemer to an open shame.

LETTER V.

Of the customary appendages to the Lord's supper; particularly public fasts and thanksgivings.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

A FEAR is entertained, that a frequency of communion, much greater than ordinary, would involve the abolition of the previous fast-day, and the subsequent day of thanksgiving; and this forms, with many conscientious people, a

IV. and very formidable objection.

The consequence is not dissembled. These observances cannot consist with a proper regard to the command of the Lord Jesus. And if we mean to obey it "in simplicity and godly sincerity," they *must* be laid aside.

The writer of these letters is very sensible that he here enters on the most delicate and difficult part of his undertaking; that, on this subject, the prejudices even of the truly pious, are both strong and irritable; and that, if a well-

meant attempt to promote a *scriptural* commemoration of the love of Jesus Christ, should fail, this is the rock on which it will perish. But being fully assured that the general attachment to these observances results less from conviction than from habit; and that a fair representation, candidly weighed, will remove every scruple, he deems it his duty to discuss them with openness and freedom. Let no upright man be alarmed for the issue. Truth cannot lose by inquiry. Error only shrinks back from the light, lest her "deeds should be reproved."

Bear with me then, Christian brethren, while, in reviewing our sacramental fast and thanksgiving days, I endeavor to show,

First, That they have no warrant in the book of God.

Secondly, That they are contrary to the judgment of almost the whole Christian church.

Thirdly, That they are attended with great and serious evils.

To prevent mistake, the reader is admonished that a day of fasting before, and of thanksgiving after, the communion, are not condemned as *in themselves unlawful*, or in every connection improper. The object of animadversion is that *system* which either inculcates their *necessity*, or perpetuates their observance. With this explanation, then, I say,

First, *That they have no warrant in the book of God.*

That the scripture is a *perfect* revelation, containing every thing necessary for the instruction and edification of the church; that nothing which it does not expressly appoint, or fairly imply, can be admitted into her doctrine, discipline, or worship; and that all opinions and practices, fathers, canons, and councils, are to be tried at its bar; are fundamental principles of protestantism. Whatever cannot abide the furnace of "the law and the testimony," though recommended by numbers, tradition, antiquity, or aught else, must be rejected as "reprobate silver." This maxim was the two-edged sword which hewed down the legions of Antichrist before the victorious reformers. It is stated, with equal strength and precision, in our confession of faith,* and is received as an axiom in religious controversy, by all whom the subject in hand more immediately interests.

In applying this maxim to the case of the fast and thanksgiving days attached to the Lord's supper, it will readily occur, that this part of Christian worship, if any, requires, in all its circumstances, to be distinctly marked.

* Chapter i. 10.

Is it, therefore, credible, that God should couple it with a day of fasting and thanksgiving, and not even mention this in his word? And yet the scripture is silent. When Jesus Christ instituted the supper, he simply said, *Take, eat; this is my body—This cup is the New Testament in my blood: drink ye all of it.* When Paul interposed, with his apostolical authority, to correct the abuses which had crept into the church at Corinth, he detailed the nature, ends, and manner of communicating. He even speaks, most pointedly, of preparation for it. *Let a man examine himself, and* so *let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.* But not a syllable of fast-days. Now, can any judicious Christian imagine, that neither Christ himself, in the institution of the supper, nor his apostle, in restoring its decayed purity, should hint at observances which both knew to be connected with it? Could such an omission have been suffered, when the Lord foresaw that, for a series of ages, his church would, in this very particular, go universally and uniformly astray?

It is not, indeed, as far as I know, maintained by any, that he has *explicitly* enjoined these days; but many plead that they are, nevertheless, *deducible* from scriptural declarations and appointments.

They find, that on the great day of expiation, a *solemn fast* was kept in Israel: and hence infer, that as a public fast preceded the offering up of the typical sacrifice for sin, so it ought to precede the commemoration of the *real* sacrifice, which is already offered. "Is not sin as evil and as bitter now as it was then, and humiliation for it as pressing a duty? Should not the memorial of Emmanuel's suffering, excite as much compunction as the prospect of it?" No doubt. Believers will never disagree in this. It is perfectly just: and yet the argument drawn from it utterly inconclusive. In tracing the *analogy* of the two cases, it overlooks an essential difference, viz. the divine precept in the one, which is wanting in the other: and in laboring to bring the Jewish *example* to bear, it presents no point of attack where it is not mortally vulnerable.

1. The Jewish fast was peculiar to the old dispensation, and so cannot establish a precedent for the new.

2. It ceased with the law of Moses; and it is certainly singular reasoning, that an ordinance which God himself hath *abolished*, infers his will, that a similar one should be *perpetuated*.

3. Our fast-days are *preparative* to the supper: but the Jewish fast bore no such relation to the sacrifice on the day of atonement. It was not a preparative, but an accompanying exercise.

4. The supper has not succeeded to the sacrifice of the day of expiation; but to the feast of the passover: it is from this institution, therefore, if from any in the Old Testament, that we are to derive the manner of celebrating it. But the passover was not preceded by a day of fasting, though it was followed by a holy convocation, and a week of unleavened bread. Here, then, is a much stronger reason from analogy, *against* our sacramental fast, than the day of expiation can furnish *for* it. And whoever finds the Monday thanksgiving in the "holy convocation" after the passover, must also find something to correspond with the "seven days of unleavened bread."

5. As the good faith of argument requires us to admit the legitimate consequences of our principles, let us see whither the plea that the fast on the day of expiation warrants a fast before the supper, will lead us.

On the same ground you must maintain that the supper should be celebrated but *once a year;* and this would be equally repugnant to its own nature, and the example of the apostles, who certainly understood the will of Christ as well as we can pretend to do.

But now, if one Jewish institution furnish a precedent for imitation, it is hard to tell why another may not; the *daily sacrifice* for instance;

seeing it as really typified the atonement of Christ, as the sacrifices of annual expiation did. Thus we should be reduced to a curious dilemma; the argument from one ordinance, limiting us to a *yearly* communion, while the argument just as good, from another, would oblige us to communicate *twice a day.*

This sample of inconsistence and contradiction, is enough to show how cautiously inferences are to be drawn from institutions under the law, to duties under the gospel. Error here has been one of the most fruitful sources of corruption; and an inlet to all the rabble of the Antichristian hierarchy.

There have not been wanting some to alledge the four fasts mentioned by Zechariah, which the Jews kept on account of their calamities, as countenancing our sacramental fasts. But the notion is so extravagant, that it would be worse than trifling to spend a moment in refuting it.

Should these refuges fail, there is one left; viz. that religious fasting, before special duties, has ever been deemed by the church of God both suitable and necessary; and that it becomes us to act upon this principle when we are about to join in the communion of "the body and blood of the Lord." Here a large column of texts is displayed, some containing the doctrine,

and some examples of fasting. But after they are collected with so much pains, and propounded with so much zeal, what do they prove? Nothing more than that fasting, on particular occasions, is a moral duty. This is mere "beating the air." Nobody denies it.

The question is not whether fasting is a divine ordinance, but whether it is a divine ordinance *preparative to the holy supper?* Now it is obvious, that the application of a principle to particular circumstances cannot be grounded upon texts which speak of it only in general, without any reference to those circumstances. Such is the nature of the passages alluded to. If in this question they prove any thing, they equally prove the necessity of fasting before baptism; before the sabbath; before family worship, or craving a blessing to our meat, as before the sacrament of the supper; because they have no more coupled it with the latter than with the former. "These things," you will say, "are absurd." Absurd enough, I own. And one would think that the argument which begets them cannot be much better.

In order, therefore, to work up your quotations into proofs, you must resort to those scriptural examples in which the principle of fasting is reduced to practice. But the success here will be little better. It would be no difficult task to

show that none of the instances which the scripture has recorded of social or solitary fasting, lend the least aid to the service into which they are pressed. Who can bear such reasoning as this? David fasted when the prophet Nathan charged upon him the guilt of adultery and murder—Ezra and his company at their return from captivity—Nehemiah with the Jews at the restitution of Jehovah's worship, and the solemn recognition of his covenant—the apostles at the ordination of ministers—therefore we must have a fast-day before the sacrament of the supper!! An apostle cautions against "wresting the scriptures;" and they are always wrested when they are brought to prove what they *will not* prove. High indignity is offered to them and to their Author when men are determined to force out of them, at all events, a testimony according to their wishes; and rather than fail, will adjudge them to the tortures of licentious criticism. Be it remembered, they are sworn witnesses for the King Eternal; let their deposition be heard; but if it do not accord with our prejudices, let us beware how we presume to order them to the rack.

It will still, however, be insisted, that scriptural precept, together with the example of the saints, establish this position, *That on the approach of special duty, and in the expectation of*

special blessings, we are to humble ourselves before God in religious fasting; and that the supper being an occasion on which we perform the one and look for the other, a preparatory fast is highly necessary. The plea accosts us here in its most imposing form. But, notwithstanding, there are weighty reasons for refusing our assent.

1. The cases are not parallel. All the scriptural instances of public fasting are founded in circumstances *out of the ordinary course of providence;* and therefore leave precedents for such circumstances *only.* But the sacrament of the supper is an *ordinary* part of divine worship; or if it be in any respect otherwise, our own negligence and not God's word has made it so.

2. If the scriptural doctrine and examples of fasting oblige us to that exercise as preparative to the Lord's table, it is beyond measure astonishing that this was never thought of till the other day; that it should not be heard of among Christians for near seventeen hundred years; nor then, except in a corner of the church; nor even in that corner till men were driven to invent a defense of a custom which they had observed, without asking whether it was right or wrong. Nay, that a principle of practical religion which involves a serious question of duty and sin, should be overlooked by the very apostles under the plenary inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and

by Christ Jesus himself! If the reader can credit all this, it is time to lay aside this discussion. It is vain to contend with prejudice impenetrable to every thing but Omnipotence.

3. The force of the plea we are examining lies in assuming, that the Lord's supper *is* one of those special occasions to which the above principle strictly applies. But this is taking for granted the very thing in dispute. That the Lord's supper is such an occasion is peremptorily denied; and the proof of the affirmative lies upon the affirmers. However, not to take the advantage of so material an error, it may be remarked, that *special* occasions of duty being such as are out of the line of God's *ordinary providence,* the special duties adapted to them must be such as depart from the line of his *ordinary worship.* As we cannot determine beforehand the period of their arrival, so we cannot beforehand determine the season of the duties attached to them. With regard to societies, they may not occur perhaps once in two or three years; and the larger the society, and the more complex the social relations, the longer in all probability will be their intervals; yet they *may* occur half a dozen times in one year. It is plain, then, that none of the ordinary institutions of the gospel can furnish any such special occasions, and so cannot obligate to any such special

duties. Now the Lord's supper is one of the most important of these ordinary* institutions; it equally belongs to times of prosperity and of adversity, of joy and of sorrow.

Farther, as it is not in itself an extraordinary duty, so the blessings which we are to seek in performing it do not come under the description of special blessings; i. e. blessings *appropriated* to special occasions as already defined. If, in controverting this sentiment, any use the term "special" more vaguely, he will only destroy his own argument, since its very existence depends on the supper being in a restricted sense a special occasion of duty. I would therefore beg the Christian to point out a single blessing to be supplicated or expected at the holy communion, which he does not, or at least ought not, to supplicate and expect in *every* approach to God through the faith of Jesus. Till this be done, all that has been and all that can be said about the *specialty* of the blessings connected with the sacrament of the supper, is mere illusion. It is not, no, it is not, a just regard for that precious ordinance, which, both in opinion and practice, hath put the prodigious difference between it and others; but *these* are not duly improved; *these* are undervalued, and men seek to compensate their fault by idolizing the other.

* Confess. of Faith, ch. xxi. 5.

On the whole it appears, that our sacramental fast and thanksgiving days are destitute of Christ's authority.* The utmost that can be alledged for them, amounting with the most liberal indulgence to no more than a *presumption* from analogy; a presumption opposed by a thousand contrary presumptions; a presumption which violates every law of analogical inference; which cuts instead of untying the knot of difficulty; attempts to browbeat facts, and flies in the face of apostolical precedent.†

* Even the soberer *papists* confess that "it does not appear by his own practice, or any commands which he gave to his disciples, that he instituted *any* particular fasts, or enjoined any to be kept *out of pure devotion.*" CALMET'S *Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. i., p. 556. Art. FASTING.

† Letter 6th being a proof and illustration of the proposition, "that public fasting and thanksgiving at the celebration of the Lord's supper, *are contrary to the judgment of almost the whole Christian church,*" drawn from the history of the church, is omitted.

LETTER VII.

The evils occasioned by sacramental fasts and thanksgivings.

Christian Brethren,

My *last* proposition concerning our sacramental fasts and thanksgivings is, that *they are attended with great and serious evils.*

1. *They establish a term of religious communion, which has no scriptural sanction.*

Christ Jesus hath specified in his word the principles, duties, and conduct of those to whom the priviliges of his house belong. His decisions, then, are the only rule of appreciating character, and ascertaining the conditions of Christian fellowship; and it is high presumption in any man, or society of men, to extend or abridge them. Now, as he hath not enjoined, either directly or by implication, a day of fasting before, or of thanksgiving after, the comme-

moration of his death, no churches under heaven have a right to require them. Yet they *are* required, for they are judged *necessary*, and to omit them is deemed *censurable*. This is to erect them, at once, into laws of conscience and laws of Christ; for nothing is necessary in his church but what he has commanded, nor any thing censurable but what he has forbidden. They are, therefore, to all intents and purposes, made terms of communion, and will deprive of the privileges of his house those who cannot feel themselves bound in conscience to observe them. And what is this? It is nothing less than to impeach the wisdom, and usurp the authority, of the Lord our lawgiver. If he will resent the unfaithfulness of those who throw down the hedge of his vineyard, and lay it open to the beasts of the field, he will equally resent the arrogance of those, who, by additions of their own, so narrow the door as to exclude his sheep.

2. As the evangelical institution of the supper does not contain our customary appendages, *the insisting upon them is reprehensible as an unwarranted addition to that part of divine worship.*

The ordinance, as Christ left it, is simplicity itself; but we have made it a very different thing from what the gospel describes it. We have encumbered it with a pompous ceremonial,

which the Lord "never commanded, neither came it into his mind."

It may, perhaps, be said, that this is a rash and unreasonable charge; that both fasting and thanksgiving are duties which God hath prescribed; and, therefore, that we do not *add* to his worship.

This is a mere evasion, and a miserable one. God, indeed, requires the observance of days of fasting and thanksgiving, but does he require it whenever the supper is to be dispensed? We are no more authorized to join what he has not joined, than to coin new modes of worship. The *connection* between the supper and the fast and thanksgiving days is a *human device*, and the *compound* is as real an addition to God's appointments as ever human presumption ventured upon. Let me not, however, be misunderstood. I have already conceded that duties, which have no necessary connection, *may* occasionally coincide in point of *time*. But if the coincidence result not from God's providence, but from man's pleasure; if it then be held up as a *rule* of conduct; if it set aside any part of scriptural obedience; if it be employed as an engine of superstition; it becomes, in the strictest sense of the word, a *corruption*, and a corruption of which it is impossible to calculate the effects. The same principle which justifies one deviation

from the simplicity of evangelical worship, will justify a thousand; and it is of small moment in what *form* the deviation presents itself. An arbitrary connection between duties is as exceptionable and dangerous as any other; because, independently on its mischief as a precedent, there is no defining its extent. Whenever men assume this power, they set an engine to work, which, without increasing or diminishing the *number* of God's institutions, may deface every part of his worship, and render it as ridiculous and contemptible as infidels or devils could wish it.

3. The multiplicity of our week-day services *is incompatible with such a frequency of communion as is our indispensable duty.*

If just regard were shown in this particular to the dying precept of our dear Lord Jesus, and all the extra days of worship kept up, no congregations either would or should submit to the burden. The tribute of time, which would be withdrawn from their ordinary occupations, would be much too great for any who "eat their bread in the sweat of their brow." This alone might convince that these days cannot be agreeable to the divine will, for they would render the New Testament worship more oppressive than the Jewish ritual. Yet they may not be touched. And the consequence is exactly what might be

expected, the memorial of the love of Jesus is a rare occurrence. These very days have invariably defeated every exertion to bring back the usages of the church to apostolical simplicity. Had it not been for them, communions would have been much more frequent, both in the church of Scotland and in the denominations which have sprung from it. The best of men have lamented, and entreated, and struggled, but all in vain. These observances repressed the spirit of generous and scriptural reform. Prejudice took the alarm—steeled her heart against conviction—stopped her ears to expostulation—drowned the voice of reason and scripture in the cry of innovation and defection; The genius of the gospel may be violated; the commands of Christ may be trodden under foot; the monument of his great sacrifice pushed out of sight—but these days which he never appointed; to which the church, founded by his apostles, was an entire stranger—these must not lose an atom of their importance or their pomp. And can men have the hardihood to call over this adulterine zeal the name of Jesus, and palm it on the world for *faithfulness* to his cross?

4. Through the accumulation of week-day services, the dispensation of the supper, seldom

as it happens, *is almost impracticable to any minister without the aid of some of his brethren.*

Is it credible that Jesus Christ hath imposed on his ministers a labor which usual health and strength are unable to sustain? Is there a text, a line, a word, in the whole Bible, to show that one part of his family should be deprived of their food, because another part are celebrating their feast? Let none plead necessity, and the duty of consulting each other's comfort. Convenience, I know, must yield to necessity. But we must first be sure the necessity is *real.* In the present case, it is obviously one of our own seeking; and the evil is only aggravated by sanctifying it with the name of a providential call. We would show our wisdom by leaving God's providence in his own hand.

5. Our sacramental fasts and thanksgivings not only destroy, as hath been proved, the sound distinction between ordinary and extraordinary duties, but *tend to banish altogether both the principle and practice of scriptural fasting and thanksgiving.*

As to the *principle.* By wedding these exercises with the sacrament of the supper, you tie down to certain periods, what the Bible has tied down to *no* periods. You attempt to fix the "times which the Father hath put in his own power." You regulate the seasons of fasting

and thanksgiving, not, as your directory has wisely done, by providential dispensations, but by human agreements. You lift yourselves up into the throne of God, and determine for him, instead of allowing him to determine for you, when those duties are proper. Now, this is directly subversive of their very principle and use. In the common acts of his government, and the stated ordinances of his worship, Jehovah hath established a permanent testimony for his supremacy and our dependence. But to quicken our sense of his continual agency, of his sovereign rule, and of our accountableness to him, he is pleased occasionally to make bare his holy arm, and, by special interpositions, to proclaim a present God. This revives our languid sensibility, awakens our slumbering cares, and leads directly either to solemn humiliation or exceeding joy before him. To join these exercises statedly, with any stated part of worship, is to disregard the very thing which *makes* them duties at all; to cherish in the rising generation an ignorance, and to breed in the risen one an oblivion of their primary end, is to wrest from the Eternal a means which he employs to teach the rebellious that he "sitteth King forever," and of which he hath reserved the application to himself. In vain do you pretend to explain the nature and occasions of fasting. Mankind

will never profit from doctrine which is a visible and perpetual contradiction to practice.

If the principle of extraordinary duties be overlooked, the scriptural performance of them cannot be preserved. Between them and their occasions, God hath created a beautiful correspondence, to which man cannot furnish a substitute. If *you* call us to such duties, and *Divine Providence* does not, we cannot enter into their spirit; because the occasion of them does not exist. And as you cannot command the latter, you cannot infuse the former. You can hardly expect any thing else than dull formality. And the Lord knoweth that this is too sadly the character of many of our sacramental fasts. Instead of deep meltings of heart, they are little better than dry and sapless ceremony. Not to mention, that, being fasts in name more than in truth, they are not seldom a mockery of the Holy One of Israel.

But this is not all. Our custom at the communion may operate as a prohibition to fasting and thanksgiving on their proper occasions. The providence of God may call to them, but the supper is in prospect, and they must be deferred till then. On the other hand, the supper may be scarcely over, before a necessity for them occurs, and then, they cannot be attended to, because we have just been engaged in them. This is no

fiction: it has actually happened, and that not once or twice. And it deserves any other name than reverence to God's institutions; for it is saying, upon the matter, "We will have our own way; we *will* fast when he does *not* require us; and we will *not* fast when he *does*." Can we lift our eyes to heaven and look for a blessing, while we are guilty of such preposterous and headstrong disobedience?

6. Our numerous services about the holy supper, *create a pernicious distinction between the sacraments.*

Being seals of the same covenant; representing the same blessings; and ordained by the same authority; one would suppose that they are to be approached with equal reverence and equal preparation. Yet we must have a public fast before, and a public thanksgiving after the one; while nobody dreams of either in connection with the other. Who taught us to make this difference? It is not in the word of God. From Genesis to the Revelation, not a passage can be alledged for public fastings and thanksgivings at the administration of the supper, which is not equally friendly to them at the administration of baptism. It does not arise from the nature of these ordinances: the approach

to God in both, is equally near, and equally solemn.*

Christian reader, do we not lament the ignorant and sinful conduct of many professors towards the sacraments? They refuse to glorify Jesus by commemorating his death, but are offended if they be not allowed to present their children in baptism. They startle at the thought of the one, but rush without concern to the other. Whence proceeds the profanation? From various causes, no doubt. But it merits consideration, whether we have not materially contributed to it by our unscriptural appendages to the holy supper. These, by throwing around it an air of superior sacredness and awe, have depreciated baptism in the eyes of men, and have led them to view it as less serious in itself, and less dangerous to be sported with. They suppose much to be requisite for the former, and little, if any thing, for the latter. Hence they demand the one with great confidence; and when questioned about their neglect of the other, tell you they are unprepared.

* If any should argue that these exercises are proper in one case, and not in the other, because the members of the congregation at large, are in the one engaged, and in the other, only a very few at most, they are requested to solve the problem, *How many communicants are requisite to a public fast?* If this be a duty at all, the number of communicants is of no importance. It is as necessary in a communion of two, as of ten thousand.

While this distinction emboldens the careless, it disheartens the feeble-minded. Not a few who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, are afraid to touch the symbols of his body and blood. They would go to his table; but when they think of attempting it, their courage fails: the spirit of bondage bows them down; and instead of feeling like children drawing nigh to a most compassionate father, they feel like criminals dragged to the tribunal of a judge. Why this unhappiness? Beyond dispute, in part from the trappings which have been hung around the table of love, and from the unwarranted manner in which even good men have permitted themselves to speak it. Between both, it has been made an object of dread. Its tender persuasions, its rich consolations, have been too little regarded; and even to believers, it has been arrayed in terrors, and fenced with thunder. Nay, Christian reader, we have exalted one sacrament at the expense of the other; we have thrown a stumbling block before a carnal world; and have countenanced a ruinous departure from equal and vigorous discipline.

7. Let not the assertion be deemed too hardy, that our manner of celebrating the supper is *unfriendly to pure and evangelical devotion.*

Ordinances are desirable, not on their own account, but as means by which communion with

Christ Jesus is promoted, and his covenant-mercies enjoyed. Believers know that they grow in grace in proportion as they live by faith upon their divine Redeemer: and that nothing is more fatal to their peace, nor casts them down more rapidly from holy attainments, than a legal dependence on duties. Now the question is certainly worth asking, and worth answering, whether the pomp of our communions does not bear strong marks of legality, and has not a strong tendency to engender and nurture it in the minds of men? Else, why this pomp at all? Why not the same simplicity here, as in other ordinances? The grace of Jesus is quite as sufficient for this as for those. But the language of our supernumerary days of worship is, that, however sufficient it may be, it is not so free as on other occasions. Nor is the opinion of their legal tendency mere surmise. Would to God it were! Every one who is not grossly ignorant of himself will own the proneness of corruption to rest in frames, duties, any thing but the grace that is in Christ Jesus; and especially, to idolize whatever has "a show of will-worship and humility." That this hath been the fruit of our additions to the scriptural mode of celebrating the Lord's supper, daily facts make but too apparent. What means this religious parade, when that blessed exercise draws near? Whence this unusual

sternness? these sudden austerities? Whence that mortified air which vanishes like a phantom, and never returns but with a returning communion? Why do so many plead for infrequent communion, on the pretext that they cannot otherwise be suitably prepared? Why do so many abstain from communicating, even at the periods which theirselves approve, if they happen to be prevented from keeping the fast-day? The plain interpretation of it is, "had I kept the fast, I had been well qualified: but now I am altogether unfit." But why not communicate without it? "The service is peculiarly holy: great preparation is very necessary, and very difficult." And what is the obvious inference? *We must work the harder.* Ah! is there no legality in all this? Yes verily. And so powerful is it in many, that not all their love to Jesus Christ, not all their zeal for his name, not all the allurements of his grace, not all the majesty of his authority, will preserve them from the deliberate violation of his command, lest they should transgress—the tradition of the elders!

8. Our sacramental fasts and thanksgivings *involve us perpetually in self-contradiction.*

We speak with great confidence, of lifting up a banner for truth; of not believing every spirit, but trying the spirits whether they are of God. We reject, in a mass, the corruptions of Popery

and prelacy. We renounce the religious observance of Christmas, Epiphany, Easter, Ascension, &c. and the festivals in honor of saints and saintesses, as superstitious and inconsistent with gospel-worship, how graceful soever to the antichristian calender. The reason of their being laid aside by the Westminster Assembly, and of their being disowned by ourselves, is their want of divine authority. "Festival-days, vulgarly called *holy-days*, HAVING NO WARRANT IN THE WORD OF GOD, are not to be continued." The reason is sound and irresistible: but the mortification is, that with this profession in our mouths, we gravely declare by our practice, and especially by justifying it, that sacramental fast and thanksgiving days, *which have no warrant in the word of God*, ARE to be continued.

Talk no more, then, to a Papist or an Episcopalian, of his uncommanded holy-days. He will reply that you have no objection to holy-days, provided they be of your own appointing. Question him not about the fast on Good Friday, before Easter Sunday. He will question you in his turn, about your Thursday or Friday fast before, what he would call, Sacrament Sunday. Ask not for *his* warrant from the Bible. He will retort, by asking for *yours*. He will produce quite as many, and quite as good proofs for *Lent*, as you can for your fast-days; and infinitely more

examples. On the ground of *decency*, he will keep up with you: on the ground of *devotion*, outstrip you: and on the ground of *antiquity*, leave you out of sight. Here, then, you are reduced to a dilemma. You must either allow his days, or give up your own. They stand and fall together. It is superlative inconsistency to inveigh against the one, and defend the other. In vain do you quirk and shuffle: the absurdity is glaring. You are fastened down, nor can you disentangle yourself by all the arts of controversial chicanery. If, therefore, we venture to attack corruptions of divine worship among others, a skillful adversary will combat us with our own weapons, and turn the edge of our testimony against our own bowels. We shall be incessantly rebuffed by the stinging, but merited taunt: "Physician! heal thyself. Hypocrite! first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." In such humiliating circumstances, it is a poor subterfuge to exclaim against the defections and incorrigibleness of the times; and to console ourselves as being reproached for Christ. This is not witnessing for truth; but putting a cheat upon ourselves, The religion of Christ is not answerable for our folly: nor hath his reproach any affinity with reproach for inconsistency. The alternative, Christian

brethren, is decisive: We must either act up to our profession, or sit down self-condemned, and silently bear our shame.

If we would have a good conscience, and an unblushing face; if we would present an invulnerable front to every foe, let us dare to acknowledge and to rectify what is amiss in ourselves. Let us not shrink from the scriptural test. If any thing which custom has taught us to value as fine gold, should prove to be dross—to the dross with it! Let us have the Christian magnanimity to say, PERISH THE TRADITIONS OF MEN! THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD BE HONORED! Then may we expect his blessing; and we shall no longer injure his truth, nor expose our profession to ridicule.*

* Should it be demanded, how a week-day service of any kind, preparatory to the supper, is more defensible than public fasts and thanksgivings, or more consistent with the foregoing reasonings? I answer, Preaching the word, unlike those exercises, is an *ordinary* part of God's worship; and, if it do not displace any other duty, can never be *unseasonable*. But should any assert a previous week-day sermon to be essential, either to the right administration of the supper, or the right preparation for it—should it be considered as obligatory, *by divine authority*, on the conscience—should it jostle other duties out of their places—should it be a pillar of will-worship—should it lead to erroneous notions of the sacraments, breeding a *false* reverence for the one, and sinful slight of the other. Could it be proved to have all, or any of these effects, the author would be the first to condemn and reject it.

LETTER VIII.

Some popular pleas for sacramental fasts and thanksgivings, briefly considered.

CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

AFTER all that has been said, will any still advocate our sacramental fasts and thanksgivings, by pleading that "they are of long standing in the church—are a laudable custom—are well meant—have been practiced by great and good men—are helpful to devotion—are either sin or duty; and if not the former, then certainly the latter?"

A word or two to each of these pretenses. As to their *antiquity*, I remark,

1. It is not true: we have already proved them to be quite modern; an innovation of yesterday.

2. Antiquity is a wretched standard of truth; the abominations of popery are more ancient than they by several centuries.

That they are a *laudable* custom is begging the question, for it is the very thing in dispute. Beside, custom is not to be the rule of worship. Many bad customs have crept into the church of God: and if their being *once* customs is a reason for their being *always* customs, the reformers acted very foolishly in throwing so many of them away. If it be not a scriptural custom, the longer it has stood the worse; the more mischief it has done; and the greater need for its immediate abolition. The injury done by custom to purity is the subject of old and heavy complaint. "Our Lord Christ called himself truth, not custom," saith Tertullian.

Their being *well-meant* is no better apology than the former. Good intentions do not sanctify a fault. The worst of things have sometimes been done with the best design. Zeal for God, not according to knowledge, has been a greater pest to his church than all the openly wicked schemes of Satan and his agents.

But *great and good men have practiced them*—And the argument will be conclusive whenever it is proved that great and good men never do wrong. Till then, we must look more at God's word than at their example. Great and good men have observed "days, and months, and times, and years;" and have used rites and ceremonies, the very mention of which, as parts or appendages

of worship, would excite among us just and universal indignation. Their errors were not so much their own as the errors of their day and place. They followed the fashion merely because it was the fashion, without serious examination, or perhaps any examination at all. This is undoubtedly the fact with respect to our sacramental fasts and thanksgivings; not one in a hundred of those who keep them having ever inquired into their reason and obligation. And this is the best apology for those worthies whose conduct is now held up as a model for ours.

But the principle of this argument is utterly intolerable. It puts an everlasting stop to reformation. Had our ancestors acted upon it, we would have been still within the precincts of that synagogue of Satan, the church of Rome. They were more enlightened. Could they hear us alledge their example in vindication of an unscriptural usage, they would be the first to resent the impiety. Not wishing us to be followers of them farther than they were of Christ, they would disown us as a spurious brood, and not the genuine sons of the Reformation. We have made miserable proficiency if we have not yet learned that maxim of Christian independence, not to call any man our master upon earth.

Will it be pretended that the days in question are *helpful to devotion?* This very pretext is

urged in behalf of Christmas, and Good Friday, and Whitsunday, and Lent. This very pretext has been an inlet to a multitude of those abuses, which in the most profligate times inundated the church of God. Nothing so ridiculous, so monstrous, so profane, as to be denied its sanction. Pictures, penances, saint worship, crosses, images, and all the rest of the ungodly trumpery, find a sanctuary here. Devotion, forsooth, cannot be maintained by means which the Lord hath appointed; but when to these men have added a host of their own inventions, they become wonderfully devout! What rashness! what presumption! As if the great God were less concerned about his own worship than we! As if he did not thoroughly know our frame, and what is necessary to cherish devout affection! As if he had left his institutions imperfect, and we must mend them!

But, says an objector, the observance of these days is *either sin or duty;* and if not the former, then certainly the latter.

As this argument appears to be a favorite with some, and one which, by involving their opponent in a perplexing dilemma, issues, they imagine, in their own certain and decisive triumph; it demands a more particular animadversion.

1. Then, the proposition that an act must be either sin or duty, is false and absurd. It is, no doubt, sinful to omit what is our duty to do, and duty to omit what is sinful to do. This, however, is nothing to the purpose; for it is only saying that duty is duty, and sin is sin. But it is not true what the proposition asserts, that if a thing be not sin, it is necessarily duty. By this mode of arguing, you must own every thing to be duty which you cannot prove to be sin. For example: you will not maintain that it would have been sin in the apostle Paul to have taken wages from the church of Corinth; for he peremptorily affirms his right to it from the ordinance of God. Then it must have been his duty; and in declining pecuniary support, he was chargeable with a breach of duty.

This same mode of arguing will convict not only the apostle of sin, but the Bible of error. Let us instance, in the vows spoken of, Deut. xxiii. 21, 23. These vows, saith the argument, were either sin or duty; not sin, most assuredly, therefore duty; and *not to vow* would have been *sinful*, because an omission of duty. But, saith the Lord, "If thou forbear to vow, it shall be *no sin* in thee." On the other hand, we might equally argue, *Not to vow* was either sin or duty. Sin it could not be, for God said so; therefore duty; so that vowing, being the opposite of

duty, would have been sinful; whereas the Lord declared it lawful, and sin not to pay it. This argument has now done its work. It has proved the apostle a fool; the word of God a contradiction; and the same act to be, at the same time, and under the same circumstances, both sin and duty, and yet neither one nor the other.

2. Were the argument in itself a good one, it would do no service, but much harm, to the cause which it is brought to aid. The sacramental fasts and thanksgivings, you alledge, are either duty or sin. That they are duty will not be granted. Then, says the terrible dilemma, they are *sin*. And what then? Why, my practice, and the practice of my forefathers, in this particular, have all along been *sinful*. Ay, there's the rub. That the practice of *others* who differ from you is sinful you can readily admit, and perhaps warmly contend. But that such a charge should be laid at your *own door*, you cannot endure; and at the very idea of extending it to your fathers, your displeasure kindles, and you exclaim, "Shall those godly men, the Bostons, the Moncrieffs, the Erskines, and the multitude of the faithful both in the church of Scotland and in the secession, who have uniformly kept the fast and the thanksgiving days, be accused of conniving at a corruption of the

Lord's worship? Away with such an unworthy reflection!"

But recollect, my friend. The position that these days must be either sin or duty is not *mine;* it is *your own.* As you never can prove them to be duty, the consequence of your principle is, that both yourself and others have sinned in observing them. It is only your own argument recoiling with the weight of a millstone upon yourself.

But taking it for granted that they cannot be sinful, as your pious ancestors observed them, and contending that they must be duty, you pronounce the omission of them to be sin; for that is not a *duty* which may be innocently neglected. Now this renders the matter unspeakbly worse.

For, in order to remove an imputation from your forefathers, you throw it upon all the holy men of God who have lived in every age of the Christian church, till a little more than a century ago; and in every part of the globe excepting the spots of Great Britain and Ireland. For they never observed the sacramental fasts and thanksgivings on which you insist. If you are resolved, then, to adhere to the principle of their being either sin or duty, you have your choice whether you will own the sin to have been in your father's skirts, or will charge it on the

whole church beside, with the apostles of Christ Jesus at their head.

This argument, therefore, embarrasses none but those who use it; and as for the others, they ought never to be heard out of the mouth of a Protestant; farl ess of any who have embraced the Westminster confessions and catechisms. With what eyes do men read these admirable composures? or with what conscience avow them as containing their own faith? Could a stranger believe that the identical pretexts on which they vindicate their sacramental fasts and thanksgivings, are enumerated in a part of this very system, which they profess to receive as founded on the word of God, and are there marked with the most unqualified reprobation? Yet such is the fact! Among the sins forbidden in the second commandment, as explained in the larger catechism, are "all superstitious devices, corrupting the worship of God, *adding to it*, or taking from it, whether invented and taken up of ourselves, or received by tradition from others, though under the title of *antiquity*, *custom*, *devotion*, *good intent*, or ANY OTHER PRETENSE WHATSOEVER."*

Let us never forget, Christian brethren, that our notions of propriety, or the examples of men, though they seem to be pillars, have no-

* Ques. 109.

thing to do in modeling Jehovah's worship. A jealous God, he will curse innovations, and overwhelm their apologists with the terror of that challenge, "Who hath REQUIRED this at your hands?"

Considering, therefore, that our sacramental fasts and thanksgivings have no divine warrant—that they are strangers in the church—that they are inconsistent with our profession—that they establish an unscriptural term of communion—that they tend to destroy the principle of public fasting and thanksgiving—to create a pernicious distinction between the sacraments—to cherish legal tempers in devotional exercises—and that they stand in the way of that great duty, the duty of frequently showing forth the death of our Redeemer—does it not become you, Christian brethren, to make a solemn pause, and to search whether, in this matter, there *be not with* YOU, *even with* YOU, *sins against the Lord your God?*

LETTER IX.

Benefits of scriptural communion.

Christian Brethren,

Those who confound the idea of change with that of innovation, or whose convictions are overpowered by their fears, view the proposal for frequent communion as pregnant with alarming consequences. Their apprehensions, however sincere, are certainly ill-founded. On the contrary, we have reason to anticipate, from this very measure, the most desirable and salutary effects.

1. *We shall enjoy the consolation of having performed a duty much and long neglected.*

In the hour of retirement and reflection, an exercised believer can hardly persuade himself, in the face of all the considerations which have been set before him, that one or two communions in the year correspond with the will of Christ, with the end of his memorial, or with his

own profession. His heart, in spite of apologies, will smite him; it will tell him, that a Savior's death merits not such forgetfulness; nor will all the week-day pageantry silence its murmurs. Unable to show a clear warrant for his appendages to the supper, and conscious that they supplant an obedience, otherwise easy, to his Lord's command, his confidence will waver, and a shade pass over his cheerfulness.

By communicating after the primitive model, in reviving its frequency, and lopping off the redundancies of human fancy, this source of disquietude will be dried up. Our Master's memorial restored to its just respect; the reproach of disregard to his dying precept wiped away; the excellence of his *simple* institutions *practically* asserted; our "keeping of the feast" more pure, because more scriptural—will be sublime attainments. They will repay, a thousandfold, the sacrifice of adverse prejudice and habit. Singleness of heart, in conforming to the obvious intentions of our Lord Jesus, will infuse into our obedience a vigor, and into our privileges a delight, which are vainly expected from conformity to the devices of men, and which can be appreciated by those alone who have smarted from the sting of a misgiving conscience.

2. *A harmony, at present impossible, will be established in our system of public worship.*

God is the God of order; and his word, which is the rule of Christian order, hath referred every duty to its proper place; ordinary duties to ordinary occasions; and duties extraordinary to occasions extraordinary. But our sacramental fast and thanksgiving days have reversed this order by wedding extraordinary duties with ordinary occasions. Now, if our arrangement be right, that of the Bible must be wrong. But as no Christian can impeach the latter, it must be admitted, not only that the former is faulty, but that dissolving the unnatural union between ordinary occasions and extraordinary duties, and reserving public fasting and thanksgiving for the seasons to which the scripture hath assigned them, viz. *providential emergencies*, will be a needful and a great reform. This will indeed curtail, by more than two thirds, the existing week-day observances, and reduce the supper of the Lord to a very simple thing. Exactly what it should be! Christ left it a very simple thing. By making it otherwise, men have only spoiled it; and be it remembered, that simplicity is the glory of *all* evangelical worship. It may have few charms for carnal professors; it may appear to them ignoble and sordid: but in proportion as it characterizes a church is "the beauty of the Lord our God upon" her. And who will not

count *that* beauty our honor and our blessedness?

3. *Our judicial profession will be rescued from charges which it is now difficult, if not impossible, to repel.*

While we maintain that the feast of the supper is *frequently* to be celebrated, and keep it only *twice in a year*—that communicating is an ordinary, and fasting an extraordinary, duty, and yet blend them in our practice—that holy days, having no warrant in the word of God, are not to be observed, and insist upon the religious observance of days which have no such warrant—it requires uncommon assurance, or betrays contemptible weakness, to vaunt our own steadfastness, and bewail the departure of others from their avowed principles. This may render us objects of derision or of pity, but not of respect. We must lie under the suspicion, if not the reproach, of hypocrisy, because our pretensions are unsupported by our conduct. But if, in the hope of teaching others, we set out with teaching ourselves—if we *exemplify* our doctrines by the severe application of them to our own church, rectifying *her* mistakes and banishing *her* corruptions—it will be manifest to the world that we contend not for the pre-eminence of party, but for the claims of truth. Such honesty will throw a lustre round our character, and

imprint a majesty upon our testimony, for which the usual clamor and acrimony would be too much honored in being called a miserable substitute. Passion would be soothed and prejudice allured. Men would listen with candor to the expostulations of conscience. We should have the praise of consistency, if not of success. And though we might fail to convince an opponent, we should at least command his esteem.

4. *Frequent and simple communions will probably purge the church of unworthy members.*

There is not a greater nuisance to Christianity than men who usurp its name without its influence; who give to Christ the vapor of the lips, and to mammon the solid homage of the heart. They are a perpetual mildew on the blossoms, a death-frost about the roots, of social piety. In any denomination, one such professor is one too many; though entire freedom from them never has been, and never may be, the happiness of any earthly connection. In the little family of the Master himself, a devil occupied the seat of an apostle. Highly favored the church which has the fewest of them, and in which their numbers are diminishing! Perhaps there could not be devised a more effectual expedient for getting rid of them, than employing them in spiritual work. With abundance of formality, they may attend to the notorious *ex-*

ternals of religion: and as a bribe to conscience, and a set-off to character, they may have no objection to the communion, *if it be not too often.* Once or twice a year will do. But strip this precious ordinance of the additions which nurture legality, or flatter pride: let it be as plain as the Bible made it, and as frequent as a believer needs it: let there be nothing to render it impressive, but its subject; or alluring, but its spirituality; and mark the consequence. The formal zealot will cool. Novelty, decency, example, may secure his compliance for a while; but it will be strange if his impatience do not at last get the ascendency. Without affection to Jesus Christ, he will grow tired of his supper. Without a principle of spiritual life, he will count spiritual worship intolerable: the more spiritual, the more intolerable: and the holy communion most intolerable of all. His soul will loathe the heavenly manna, and by degrees he will drop off. It is not asserted that this would be the course of every formalist. Of some it more than probably would. And every one who should thus become a self-detector, would be a clear deduction from the mass of enmity, in a particular church, to the interest of truth and holiness.

5. *A blessed fruit of frequent communions would be the promotion of brotherly love.*

In nothing is the religion of Jesus more dishonored, than in the want of that kind affection which ought to subsist between the heirs of a common salvation. No trait of moral character is in itself more amiable or excellent; none more ornamental to the gospel of Christ; none more powerfully recommended by his example; more peremptorily enjoined by his authority; more solemnly insisted upon in his word, as a test of profession; than the grace of love. And the time *has been*, when it formed the chief distinction of a disciple. In those days of primitive glory which we commend so much, and imitate so little, the mortified, yet admiring pagan, could not forbear to exclaim, "Behold, how these Christians love one another!" Alas! the sad reverse! Professors of every name, should they agree in nothing else, agree in forgetting the lesson of love. To judge from facts, one would suppose that we are commanded not to "put away," but to cherish, "all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, with all malice." For it is too evident, that amid the lust of pre-eminence, and the strife of party, the meekness of the gospel is banished, its charities stifled, and the most sacred appellations bestowed on wranglings which nurture malignant corruption, and scatter infernal pestilence. The infidel stands by, a spectator of these guilty

scenes, and scoffingly remarks, that Christians "have just religion enough to make them hate one another heartily." This departure from the *spirit* of the gospel, among those who retain its *doctrines*, is a common, and a GRAND APOSTASY. The Holy one of Israel cannot suffer it to pass with impunity; and it is doubtless a principal cause of the controversy which he is now pleading with us, by restraining his gracious influence, and permitting the adversary to triumph.

In searching for the reasons of this difference, so little to our credit, between ourselves and the first believers, their attention, compared with our inattention, to the table of the Lord, is too remarkable to be overlooked. At this holy ordinance *they* were incessantly together. Between *our* communions is an interval of several months. When *they* rose from the sacramental bread, it was their joy, that in a few days they should mingle their friendship, and renew their vows, in the same spiritual covenant. With *us*, after one feast is over, it is so long before another come, that we almost forget we are brethren. The monument of a Savior's death, with us a rarity, being continually before their eyes, kept their faith steady; awakened the most tender emotions; and preached to their hearts the duty of mutual love. Could it be otherwise? If reiterated meditation fix the evanescent impres-

sion; if the object of warm attachment stir the soul; if society in an exercise purified by grace, and elevated by devotion, beget reciprocal endearment: then must frequent communion have an auspicious influence on Christian charity. Love is inscribed on every object, every action, every circumstance, connected with it. No admittance here for diabolical tempers. A son of malice may thrust himself outwardly among the children, but he is no child; nor does he partake of the children's food. The bread of earth he may eat, and the wine of earth he may drink: but he has no communion in the body and blood of crucified Jesus. He is, therefore, out of the question. It relates to none but living disciples. Now, is it possible that believers should indulge a sentiment of *pride*, when they are at once reminded that they were *lifted from the dunghill*, and receive the pledge of a celestial crown? A sentiment of *revenge*, when they realize that God is in Christ *reconciling* them to himself? A sentiment of *enmity*, when he is saying to them, I am *pacified* towards *thee* FOR ALL THAT THOU HAST DONE; and thy sins and thine iniquities will I remember no more? When they feel themselves infinite debtors to the love of Jesus, can they disobey his commandment enforced by this argument from his own gracious lips, *as I have loved you, so do ye also love one another?* Let

Christians declare from their own experience whether they have not often felt, on sacramental occasions, a more than usual interest and complacency in each other? Whether suspicion and coldness, contention and revilings, among brethren, ever appear to them more indecent and detestable; whether they are ever more ashamed of themselves and of others for the want of mutual love, than when they have risen with spiritual-mindedness from the table spread for the household of faith? Indeed, if it is a mean of exciting our love to the Lord Jesus, it must be a mean, and a powerful one too, of exciting love to one another; for in proportion as we love him, we will love his image, and be governed by his Spirit. And it is no less clear that this is one of the ends of its institution. For, being the memorial of our Redeemer's love to us, it sets before us the amiable pattern of our love to each other. It is almost impossible to contemplate it in the former light, and not in the latter; and altogether so, to contemn it in the latter without profaning it in the former.

The result is, that spiritual communions having a natural and necessary effect in cherishing Christian love, their *frequency* must have a proportional effect in *augmenting* it. An appeal to facts will justify the inference. The whole weight of primitive example is in its favor. And

at this hour, no churches, in point of harmony and love, exhibit so fair a copy of that example as those in which communions are most frequent and most simple.

Would you, then, dear brethren, contribute to banish the animosities which are but too prevalent in the family of faith, and to revive the love of former days, repair *often* to your sacramental table: there learn that "in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." There pray with the apostle, and with him embody in your actions the spirit of the prayer, "AS MANY as walk according to THIS RULE, peace be on them, and mercy even upon the Israel of God."

6. *It is by no means improbable, that the restoration of scriptural communions may usher in a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.*

It has just been shown, that no mean will more effectually conduce to the revival of love; and with the grace of love every other grace flourishes. In that sweet confidence and endearment which are inseparable from it, believers strengthen each other's faith, and are helpers of each other's joy; nor is there, in the whole circle of social graces and duties, any which the Lord more delighteth to honor.

Beside, the nearer a church approaches in her worship to the institutions of the Lord Jesus,

the more solid ground has she to implore and to expect his countenance. Christians, the strength of whose judgment was exceeded only by the fervor of their piety, have complained that a damp hath settled on their spirits, and the liberty of God's children been remarkably denied them, on the sacramental fasts and thanksgivings. The only reason they could assign for the fact is, that they could not say they had God's warrant for them. Laying them aside, and retaining his appointments, faith can plead both his warrant and his promise. He hath sufficiently taught us, and often "by terrible things in righteousness," that he will not sanctify the liberties which men take with his worship. If they throw it into a form different from that which he hath prescribed, they have no right to look for his blessing. And if at any time they enjoy it notwithstanding, it is an act of mere sovereignty condescending to their infirmities. Historical testimony may be confirmed by our own observation, that the power of godliness declines in a church as the inventions of men prevail. And on the contrary, that in those churches which are freest from them, the life of religion, and the presence of the Lord with his ordinances, are most conspicuous. It demands, indeed, no small degree of spiritual-mindedness, and of reliance on his wisdom and truth, to be

satisfied with them exactly as he has left them. They are so plain, so noiseless, so unlike every carnal notion of importance, that when compared with their destined effects, unsanctified reason stands astonished, and cries, how can it be? Yet Israel's King hath chosen to work in a manner, and by means, which shall mortify human pride, and exalt his name. It is the highest attainment of any Christian society to "receive, observe, and keep pure and entire all such religious worship and ordinances as he hath appointed in his word;" humbly committing their success to himself, and steadily resisting the encroachment of human officiousness. The fear that discarding all uncommanded observances, and bringing back our sacramental feast to the simplicity and frequency from which it has swerved, would destroy reverence and breed carelessness, proceeds from unbelief in his providence and promise. The protection of this blessed ordinance would then be placed where it ought to be, in the hands of its Author; and our attendance on it would be distinguished by greater power and glory, because it would have more of God and less of man. A church casting off her errors in a day of coldness, declension, and blasphemy—doing homage to truth by sacrificing her prejudices, her habits, her traditions—setting at defiance the scoff of the world-

ling, and the clamor of the formalist, in order to conform more perfectly to scriptural establishments, and honor more pointedly the love of Jesus, would be a spectacle not more singular than magnificent. It would bespeak the doing of the Lord; and would be a token, such as we have never had, that he is about to revive his work in the midst of the years, to build up our Zion, and appear to us in his glory. And in the hope thereof, when we see this, our heart shall rejoice, and our bones shall flourish as an herb.

Lastly. *The proposed reform will be a preparative for trial.*

With trials we may, at all events, lay our account. They even commonly precede a revival. The messenger of the covenant, when he comes into his temple, is "like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap." And the less stubble to be consumed, the fewer stains to be washed out, the better, as the preliminary discipline will be gentler. And while he shakes the nations, should he also, as appearances indicate, sift the churches, *they* will suffer the least in whose skirts are the fewest abominations. Uncommanded observances will then be found to be a serious evil, and the zeal that defended them will be rewarded with stripes.

If we would be ready, O brethren, to meet our God, let us give all diligence that our public

order, as well as our personal hope, be built upon the naked rock; and in the day of the tempest both will stand fabrics fair and immovable, when the rubbish of human devices and of human flatteries are swept away, and made the sport of the whirlwind.

"Now may the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

A

LETTER ORIGINALLY ADDRESSED

TO

THE MEMBERS

OF THE

ASSOCIATE REFORMED CHURCH

IN

NORTH AMERICA,

RELATIVE TO

MINISTERS' SALARIES.

1810.

A LETTER, &c.

Brethren,

The ministers and elders in general synod assembled, considering with much anxiety the state of the churches committed to their care by the Lord Jesus, and inquiring into the means by which his glory may be most extensively promoted in the advancement of those churches in knowledge, faith, and holiness, have judged it proper to address you respecting a duty which it belongs to you to perform, and the performance of which has the most beneficial influence on those objects, while the neglect of it is attended with consequences of the most injurious and ruinous tendency.

The most melancholy bodings press on the mind when we behold a large portion of the talents which the Head of the church has be-

stowed on her ministry for her edification, unoccupied, languishing, and expiring. This, brethren, is too common an occurrence in our day. A fault there must be somewhere; perhaps in different quarters. But there can be no doubt whatever that one great cause of this evil is the inadequate support afforded to ministers of the gospel, and particularly the tardy and irregular manner in which it is not unfrequently furnished. The effects of this ill-judged parsimony are alarming. When the ministers of the gospel find it impossible to devote themselves to reading, study, and research—when, like the Levites in the days of Nehemiah, they have fled to their fields to labor for their bread, instead of waiting on the service of the sanctuary—the inevitable consequence is that leanness and poverty must mark their public ministrations. It cannot be otherwise; people deceive themselves if they imagine that their minister can bring out of his treasure things new and old—that he can be a workman who needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth—on any other terms than an habitual and vigorous application to the study of divine things, and that too under the favorable circumstances of competent talents and a competent library. It is a fixed law of nature's God that a man, to be an intelligent instructor of others, must first be a dili-

gent student himself; and no man can be either the one or the other, unless it be the exclusive business of his life. The habit of pouring out an harangue of trite and indigested truths, enlivened occasionally perhaps with flashes of original genius, will not long answer the purpose of edification to any Christian congregation. To train up babes into men and fathers in the church of God, and feed them with strong meat, a minister must be mighty in the scriptures; not merely to cite them by rote, but to interpret them according to the genuine meaning of the Spirit of their Author, and to apply their doctrines for the refutation of existing errors, the support of contested truth, and the general regulation of Christian conduct. It is not a few hours snatched from secular employments and cares that will suffice for these things. Besides the very routine of ministerial service, in catechising, visiting the sick, attending courts of judicature, engrosses a large portion of a minister's time. It is demonstrably certain that no church ever can be well served, whose ministry is not exclusively devoted to their work.

We exhort you, therefore, brethren, that nothing be omitted on your part to secure this appropriation of your minister's labors. It is neither just, nor equitable, nor possible, that you should receive the whole of their labors, unless

you support them liberally. In particular be scrupulously punctual in fulfilling your contracts with them. Give them no reason to suspect you of indifference to their comfort, or of trifling with your obligations. This is a matter of mere common justice. Not only has a righteous God pronounced a wo to him that useth his neighbor's service without wages, but he has made the instantaneous payment of the debt a matter of special statute, *Thou shalt not oppress a hired servant—at his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it.* Does God interest himself for the servants of men, and shall he not much more interest himself for his own servants, who serve him in the gospel of his Son?

Want of punctuality in the payment of ministers' salaries is well known to be a grievous evil too generally prevalent. And while it involves them in the necessity of violating their obligations and promises, and thus exposes their profession to reproach, it ultimately falls heaviest on the people themselves. The minister gets chagrined with his people, and they with him; each justifies omission of duty by alledging the neglect of the other. Love cools, mutual reproach ensues, and an imbittered separation is often the result. Brethren, let no ground of complaint on this subject exist for a moment. It

is unworthy of the Christian name; it ought to be beneath you as men. Let it never be heard that the church of Christ keeps back the bread of those who feed her with the bread of life.

But, brethren, not only be punctual in discharging your contracts, but see that when discharged they furnish an adequate means to your ministers to devote themselves to your service. You are entitled to the full benefit of all their talents; and exact your right with rigor. You ought not to be content with half service. Yet more than half service cannot be rendered when a man is obliged to devote his time and cares to secular pursuits. It is by no means even wished that gospel ministers should be rendered a rich body of men. And if the wish were entertained, a knowledge of the principles which operate on moral society would render every hope of realising it chimerical. A ministry called and supported by their congregations never can be rich. The office is too honorable, and has too many precious consolations and glorious hopes connected with it, ever to be productive of wealth. These advantages are themselves an essential part of a minister's compensation; and for them he gives up the prospects of civil offices and honors, of wealth and ease. But he ought to be able to live among his people in a decent rank, to support a family, to educate his children,

to pursue the studies becoming his profession, to bear the expenses incident to his attendance on courts of judicature, and to exercise hospitality, which the Divine Spirit has entered in the list of ministerial virtues. Such a support as will gain these ends is adequate, and every thing less is inadequate.

It is an institution of the Lord Jesus, that the gospel ministry should be supported by those whom they serve, as much as it was an institution of Moses that the Priests and Levites should be supported by those whom they served. And when he sent forth his disciples, he commanded them to make no provision for their expenses on the principle that the laborer is worthy of his hire. "The Lord hath ordained (says Paul) that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." It is the will of God that if any work not, neither should he eat; that every man who laboreth should eat of the fruit of his labor, and that his ministry should be supported by their ministerial labors. It is on the due observation of his own institutions that his blessing is to be expected.

It is our wish to recommend this subject to the special notice of our vacancies. Let them take measures to be prepared for the support of a future ministry. A population increasing with unexampled rapidity, creates a demand for an

increase of gospel ministers far beyond what is generally conceived. Many who may feel an inclination to devote themselves to the service of God in the gospel of his Son, will be disheartened if they have reason to believe that only the shreds of their time and talents can be occupied in that service. On the other hand, we do believe, that if a reasonable prospect is held out that when young men shall have expended their patrimony on their education, and shall have acquired those literary habits which disqualify for secular pursuits, they will enjoy a life appropriated to the duties of their selected station, it will fix many a wavering resolution.

Brethren, the glory of the Lord Jesus, your own edification, peace, and comfort, the stability and extension of the church of the living God, are deeply involved in the duties which have been recommended to you. We hope you will duly weigh them; and may the Lord direct you in this, and in all matters relating to his glory and your own edification.

ADDRESS

OF THE

CONVENTION OF DELEGATES,

BY WHOM WAS FORMED

THE AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY,

TO THE

PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES.

ADDRESS.

TO THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES.

Every person of observation has remarked that the times are pregnant with great events. The political world has undergone changes stupendous, unexpected, and calculated to inspire thoughtful men with the most boding anticipations.

That there are in reserve, occurrences of deep, of lasting, and of general interest, appears to be the common sentiment. Such a sentiment has not been excited without a cause, and does not exist without an object. The cause is to be sought in that Providence which adapts, with wonderful exactitude, means to ends; and the object is too plain to be mistaken by those who carry a sense of religion into their speculations upon the present and the future condition of our afflicted race.

An excitement, as extraordinary as it is powerful, has roused the nations to the importance of spreading the knowledge of the one living and true God, as revealed in his Son, the Mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus. This excitement is the more worthy of notice, as it has followed a period of philosophy, falsely so called, and has gone in the track of those very schemes which, under the imposing names of reason and liberality, were attempting to seduce mankind from all which can bless the life that is, or shed a cheering radiance on the life that is to come.

We hail the re-action, as auspicious to whatever is exquisite in human enjoyment, or precious to human hope. We would fly to the aid of all that is holy, against all that is profane; of the purest interest of the community, the family, and the individual, against the conspiracy of darkness, disaster, and death—to help on the mighty work of Christian charity—to claim our place in the age of Bibles.

We have, indeed, the secondary praise, but still the praise, of treading in the footsteps of those who have set an example without a parallel—an example of the most unbounded benevolence and beneficence: and it cannot be to us a source of any pain, that it has been set by

those who are of one blood with the most of ourselves; and has been embodied in a form so noble and so Catholic, as "*The British and Foreign Bible Society.*"

The impulse which that institution, ten thousand times more glorious than all the exploits of the sword, has given to the conscience of Europe, and to the slumbering hope of millions in the region and shadow of death, demonstrates to Christians of every country what they *cannot* do by insulated zeal; and what they *can* do by co-operation.

In the United States we want nothing but concert to perform achievements astonishing to ourselves, dismaying to the adversaries of truth and piety, and most encouraging to every evangelical effort, on the surface of the globe.

No spectacle can be so illustrious in itself, so touching to man, or so grateful to God, as a nation pouring forth its devotion, its talent, and its treasures, for that kingdom of the Savior which is righteousness and peace.

If there be a single measure which can overrule objection, subdue opposition, and command exertion, this is the measure. That all our voices, all our affections, all our hands, should be joined in the grand design of promoting "peace on earth and good will toward man"—that they should resist the advance of misery—

should carry the light of instruction into the dominions of ignorance; and the balm of joy to the soul of anguish; and all this by diffusing the oracles of God—addresses to the understanding an argument which cannot be encountered; and to the heart an appeal which its holiest emotions rise up to second.

Under such impressions, and with such views, fathers, brethren, fellow-citizens, the *American Bible Society* has been formed. Local feelings, party prejudices, sectarian jealousies, are excluded by its very nature. Its members are leagued in that, and in that alone, which calls up every hallowed, and puts down every unhallowed, principle—the dissemination of the scriptures in the received versions where they exist, and in the most faithful where they may be required. In such a work, whatever is dignified, kind, venerable, true, has ample scope; while sectarian littleness and rivalries can find no avenue of admission.

The only question is, whether an object of such undisputed magnitude can be best attained by a national society, or by independent associations in friendly understanding and correspondence.

Without entering into the details of this inquiry, we may be permitted to state, in a few

words, our reasons of preference to a national society supported by local societies and by individuals throughout our country.

Concentrated action is powerful action. The same powers, when applied by a common direction, will produce results impossible to their divided and partial exercise. A national object unites national feeling and concurrence. Unity of a great system combines energy of effect with economy of means. Accumulated intelligence interests and animates the public mind. And the Catholic efforts of a country, thus harmonized, give her a place in the moral convention of the world; and enable her to act directly upon the universal plans of happiness which are now pervading the nations.

It is true, that the prodigious territory of the United States—the increase of their population, which is gaining every day upon their moral cultivation—and the dreadful consequences which will ensue from a people's outgrowing the knowledge of eternal life; and reverting to a species of heathenism, which shall have all the address and profligacy of civilized society, without any religious control, present a sphere of action, which may for a long time employ and engross the cares of this society, and of all the local Bible societies of the land.

In the distinct anticipation of such an urgency, one of the main objects of the *American Bible Society*, is, not merely to provide a sufficiency of well printed and accurate editions of the scriptures; but also to furnish great districts of the American continent with well executed stereotype plates, for their cheap and extensive diffusion throughout regions which are now scantily supplied, at a discouraging expense; and which, nevertheless, open a wide and prepared field for the reception of revealed truth.

Yet, let it not be supposed, that geographical or political limits are to be the limits of the *American Bible Society*. That designation is meant to indicate, not the restriction of their labor, but the source of its emanation. They will embrace, with thankfulness and pleasure, every opportunity of raying out, by means of the Bible, according to their ability, the light of life and immortality, to such parts of the world, as are destitute of the blessing, and are within their reach. In this high vocation, their ambition is to be fellow-workers with them who are fellow-workers with God.

People of the United States;

Have you ever been invited to an enterprize of such grandeur and glory? Do you not value the Holy Scriptures? Value them as containing your sweetest hope; your most thrill-

ing joy? Can you submit to the thought that *you* should be torpid in your endeavors to disperse them, while the rest of Christendom is awake and alert? Shall *you* hang back, in heartless indifference, when princes come down from their thrones, to bless the cottage of the poor with the gospel of peace; and imperial sovereigns are gathering their fairest honors from spreading abroad the oracles of the Lord your God? Is it possible that *you* should not see, in this state of human things, a mighty motion of Divine providence? The most heavenly charity treads close upon the march of conflict and blood! The world is at peace! Scarce has the soldier time to unbind his helmet, and to wipe away the sweat from his brow, ere the voice of mercy succeeds to the clarion of battle, and calls the nations from enmity to love! Crowned heads bow to the head which is to wear "many crowns;" and for the first time since the promulgation of Christianity, appear to act in unison for the recognition of its gracious principles, as being fraught alike with happiness to man and honor to God.

What has created so strange, so beneficent an alteration? This is no doubt the doing of the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes. But what instrument has he thought fit chiefly to use? That which contributes, in all latitudes

and climes, to make Christians feel their unity, to rebuke the spirit of strife, and to open upon them the day of brotherly concord—the Bible! the Bible!—through Bible societies!

Come then, fellow-citizens, fellow-Christians, let us join in the sacred covenant. Let no heart be cold; no hand be idle: no purse reluctant! Come, while room is left for us in the ranks whose toil is goodness, and whose recompense is victory. Come cheerfully, eagerly, generally. Be it impressed on your souls, that a contribution, saved from even a cheap indulgence, may send a Bible to a desolate family; may become a radiating point of "grace and truth" to a neighborhood of error and vice: and that a number of such contributions made at really no expense, may illumine a large tract of country, and successive generations of immortals, in that celestial knowledge, which shall secure their present and their future felicity.

But whatever be the proportion between expectation and experience, thus much is certain: We shall satisfy our conviction of duty—we shall have the praise of high endeavors for the highest ends—we shall minister to the blessedness of thousands, and tens of thousands, of whom we may never see the faces, nor hear the names. We shall set forward a system of happiness which will go on with accelerated motion and

augmented vigor, after we shall have finished our career; and confer upon our children, and our children's children, the delight of seeing the wilderness turned into a fruitful field, by the blessing of God upon that seed which their fathers sowed, and themselves watered. In fine we shall do our part toward that expansion and intensity of light divine, which shall visit, in its progress, the palaces of the great, and the hamlets of the small, until the whole "earth be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea!"

A

FUNERAL ORATION,

ON THE

DEATH OF GENERAL WASHINGTON,

DELIVERED IN THE

BRICK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

IN THE

CITY OF NEW YORK, 22d FEBRUARY, 1800.

FUNERAL ORATION.

Fellow-citizens,

The offices of this day belong less to eloquence than to grief. We celebrate one of those great events, which, by uniting public calamity with private affliction, create in every bosom a response to the throes of an empire. God, who doeth wonders, whose ways must be adored but not questioned, in severing from the embraces of America her first-beloved patriot, has imposed on her the duty of blending impassioned feeling with profound and unmurmuring submission. An assembled nation, lamenting a father in their departed chief; absorbing every inferior consideration in the sentiments of their common loss; mingling their recollections and their anticipations; their wishes, their regrets, their sympathies, and their tears; is a spectacle not more tender than awful, and excites emo-

tions too mighty for utterance. I should have no right to complain, Americans, if, instead of indulging me with your attentions, you should command me to retire, and leave you to weep in the silence of wo. I should deserve the reprimand were I to appear before you with the pretensions of eulogy. No! Eulogy has mistaken her province and her powers when she assumes for her theme the glory of WASHINGTON. His deeds and his virtues are his high eulogium. His deeds most familiar to your memories—his virtues most dear to your affections. To me, therefore, nothing is permitted, but to borrow from yourselves. And though a pencil more daring than mine would languish in attempting to retrace the living lines which the finger of Truth has drawn upon your hearts, you will bear with me, while, on a subject which dignifies every thing related to it, "I tell you that which you yourselves do know."

The name of WASHINGTON, connected with all that is most brilliant in the history of our country and in human character, awakens sensations which agitate the fervors of youth, and warm the chill bosom of age. Transported to the times when America rose to repel her wrongs and to claim her destinies, a scene of boundless grandeur bursts upon our view. Long had her filial duty expostulated with parental injustice.

Long did she deprecate the rupture of those ties which she had been proud of preserving and displaying. But her humble intreaty spurned, aggression followed by the rod, and the rod by scorpions, having changed remonstrance into murmur, and murmur into resistance, she transfers her grievances from the throne of earth to the throne of heaven, and precedes by an appeal to the God of battles her appeal to the sword of war. At issue now with the mistress of the seas—unfurnished with equal means of defense—the convulsive shock approaching—and every evil omen passing before her—one step of rashness or of folly may seal her doom. In this accumulation of trouble, who shall command her confidence, and face her dangers, and conduct her cause? God, whose kingdom ruleth over all, prepares from afar the instruments best adapted to his purpose. By an influence which it would be as irrational to dispute as it is vain to scrutinize, he stirs up the spirit of the statesman and the soldier. Minds, on which he has bestowed the elements of greatness, are brought by his providence into contact with exigencies which rouse them into action. It is in the season of effort and of peril that impotence disappears and energy arises. The whirlwind which sweeps away the glowworm, uncovers the fire of genius, and kindles it into a blaze that

irradiates at once both the zenith and the poles. But among the heroes who sprung from obscurity when the college, the counting-house, and the plough, teemed with "thunderbolts of war," none could, in all respects, meet the wants and the wishes of America. She required, in her leader, a man reared under her own eye; who combined with distinguished talent a character above suspicion; who had added to his physical and moral qualities the experience of difficult service; a man who should concentrate in himself the public affections and confidences; who should know how to multiply the energies of every other man under his direction, and to make disaster itself the means of success—his arm a fortress, and his name a host. Such a man it were almost presumption to expect; but such a man all-ruling Heaven had provided, and that man was WASHINGTON.

Pre-eminent already in worth, he is summoned by his country to the pre-eminence of toil and of danger. Unallured by the charms of opulence—unappalled by the hazard of a dubious warfare—unmoved by the prospect of being, in the event of failure, the first and most conspicuous victim, he obeys her mandate because he loves his duty. The resolve is firm, for the probation is terrible. His theatre is a world; his charge, a family of nations; the in-

terest staked in his hands, the prosperity of millions unborn in ages to come. His means, under aid from on high, the resources of his own breast, with the raw recruits and irregular supplies of distracted colonies. O crisis worthy of such a hero! Followed by her little bands, her prayers, and her tears, Washington espouses the quarrel of his country. As he moves on to the conflict, every heart palpitates and every knee trembles. The foe, alike valiant and veteran, presents no easy conquest, nor aught inviting but to those who had consecrated their blood to the public weal. The Omnipotent, who allots great enjoyment as the meed of great exertion, had ordained that America should be free, but that she should learn to value the blessing by the price of its acquisition. She shall go to a "wealthy place," but her way is "through fire and through water." Many a generous chief must bleed, and many a gallant youth sink, at his side, into the surprised grave; the field must be heaped with slain, the purple torrent must roll, ere the angel of peace descend with his olive. It is here, amid devastation, and horror, and death, that Washington must reap his laurels, and engrave his trophies on the shields of immortality. Shall Delaware and Princeton? Shall Monmouth and York?—But I may not particularize; far less repeat the tale which

babes recite, which poets sing, and Fame has published to a listening world. Every scene of his action was a scene of his triumph. Now he saved the republic by more than Fabian caution; now he avenged her by more than Carthaginian fierceness; while at every stroke her forests and her hills re-echoed to her shout, "The sword of the LORD and of WASHINGTON!" Nor was this the vain applause of partiality and enthusiasm. The blasted schemes of Britain, her broken and her captive hosts, proclaimed the terror of his arms. Skilled were her chiefs, and brave her legions; but bravery and skill rendered them a conquest more worthy of Washington. True, he suffered in his turn repulse, and even defeat. It was both natural and needful. Unchequered with reverse, his story would have resembled rather the fictions of romance than the truth of narrative; and had he been neither defeated nor repulsed, we had never seen all the grandeur of his soul. He arrayed himself in fresh honors by that which ruins even the great—vicissitude. He could not only subdue an enemy, but, what is infinitely more, he could subdue misfortune. With an equanimity which gave temperance to victory, and cheerfulness to disaster, he balanced the fortunes of the state. In the face of hostile prowess; in the midst of mutiny and treason; surrounded with astonishment, irreso-

lution, and despondence; Washington remained erect, unmoved, invincible. Whatever ills America might endure in maintaining her rights, she exulted that she had nothing to fear from her commander in chief. The event justified her most sanguine presages. That invisible hand which girded him at first, continued to guard and to guide him through the successive stages of the revolution. Nor did he account it a weakness to bend the knee in homage to its supremacy, and prayer for its direction. This was the armor of Washington; this the salvation of his country.

The hope of her reduction at length abandoned; her war of liberty brought, in the establishment of independence, to that honorable conclusion for which it had been undertaken; the hour arrived when he was to resign the trust which he had accepted with diffidence. To a mind less pure and elevated, the situation of America would have furnished the pretext as well as the means of military usurpation. Talents equal to daring enterprize; the derangement of public affairs; unbounded popularity; and the devotion of a suffering army, would have been to every other a strong, and to almost any other an irresistible, temptation. In Washington they did not produce even the pain of self-denial. They added the last proof of his

disinterestedness, and imposed on his country the last obligation to gratitude. Impenetrable by corrupting influence; deaf to honest but erring solicitation; irreconcilable with every disloyal sentiment; he urged the necessity, and set the example, of laying down in peace arms assumed for the common defense. But to separate from the companions of his danger and his glory was, even for Washington, a difficult task. About to leave them forever, a thousand sensations rushed upon his heart, and all the soldier melted in the man. He, who has no tenderness, has no magnanimity. Washington could vanquish, and Washington could weep. Never was affection more cordially reciprocated. The grasped hand; the silent anguish; the spontaneous tear trickling down the scarred cheek; the wistful look, as he passed, after the warrior who should never again point their way to victory—form a scene for nature's painter and for nature's bard.

But we must not lose, in our sensibility, the remembrance of his penetration, his prudence, his regard of public honor and of public faith. Abhorring outrage; jealous for the reputation, and dreading the excesses, of even a gallant army, flushed with conquest, prompted by incendiaries, and sheltered by a semblance of right, his last act of authority is to dismiss them to

their homes without entering the capital. Accompanied with a handful of troops, he repairs to the council of the states, and through them surrenders to his country the sword which he had drawn in her defense. Singular phenomenon! WASHINGTON becomes a private citizen. He exchanges supreme command for the tranquillity of domestic life. Go, incomparable man! to adorn no less the civic virtues than the splendid achievements of the field. Go, rich in the consciousness of thy high deserts. Go, with the admiration of the world, with the plaudit of millions, and the orisons of millions more for thy temporal and thine eternal bliss!

The glory of Washington seemed now complete. While the universal voice proclaimed that he might decline with honor every future burden, it was a wish and an opinion, almost as universal, that he would not jeopard the fame which he had so nobly won. Had personal considerations swayed his mind, this would have been his own decision. But, untutored in the philosophism of the age, he had not learned to separate the maxims of wisdom from the injunctions of duty. His soul was not debased by that moral cowardice which fears to risk popularity for the general good. Having assisted in the formation of an efficient government which he had refused to dictate or enforce at the mouth

of his cannon, he was ready to contribute the weight of his character to insure its effect; and his country rejoiced in an opportunity of testifying, that, much as she loved and trusted others, she still loved and trusted him most. Hailed, by her unanimous suffrage, the pilot of the state, he approaches the awful helm, and grasping it with equal firmness and ease, demonstrates that *forms* of power cause no embarrassment to him.

In so novel an experiment as a nation framing a government for herself under no impulse but that of reason, adopting it through no force but the force of conviction, and putting it into operation without bloodshed or violence, it was all important that her first magistrate should possess her unbounded good will. Those elements of discord which lurked in the diversity of local interest; in the collision of political theories; in the irritations of party; in the disappointed or gratified ambition of individuals; and which, notwithstanding her graceful transition, threatened the harmony of America, it was for Washington alone to control and repress. His tried integrity, his ardent patriotism, were instead of a volume of arguments for the excellence of that system which he approved and supported. Among the simple and honest whom no artifice was omitted to ensnare, there were thousands who knew little of the philosophy of govern-

ment, and less of the nice machinery of the constitution; but they knew that Washington was wise and good; they knew it was impossible that *he* should betray them; and by this they were rescued from the fangs of faction. Ages will not furnish so instructive a comment on that cardinal virtue of republicans, confidence in the men of their choice; nor a more salutary antidote against the pestilential principle, that the soul of a republic is jealousy. At the commencement of her federal government, mistrust would have ruined America; in confidence she found her safety.

The reappearance of Washington as a statesman excited the conjecture of the old world, and the anxiety of the new. His martial fame had fixed a criterion, however inaccurate, of his civil administration. Military genius does neither confer nor imply political ability. Whatever merit may be attached to the faculty of arranging the principles, and prosecuting the details, of an army, it must be conceded that vaster comprehensions belong to the statesman. Ignorance, vanity, the love of paradox, and the love of mischief, affecting to sneer at the "mystery of government," have indeed taught that common sense and common honesty are his only requisites. The nature of things and the experience of every people, in every age, teach a

different doctrine. America had multitudes who possessed both those qualities, but she had only one WASHINGTON. To adjust, in the best compromise, a thousand interfering views, so as to effect the greatest good of the whole with the least inconvenience to the parts; to curb the dragon of faction by means which insure the safety of public liberty; to marshal opinion and prejudice among the auxiliaries of the law; in fine, to touch the main spring of national agency, so as to preserve the equipoise of its powers, and to make the feeblest movement of the extremities accord with the impulse at the centre, is only for genius of the highest order. To excel equally in military and political science has been the praise of a few chosen spirits, among whom, with a proud preference, we enrol the Father of our country.

It was the fortune of Washington to direct transactions of which the repetition is hardly within the limits of human possibilities. When he entered on his first presidency, all the interests of the continent were vibrating through the arch of political uncertainty. The departments of the new government were to be marked out and filled up; foreign relations to be regulated; the physical and moral strength of the nation to be organized; and that at a time when scepticism in politics, no less than in religion and morals,

was preparing throughout Europe to spring the mine of revolution and ruin. In discharging his first duties, that same intelligent, cautious, resolute proceedure, which had rendered him the bulwark of war, now exhibited him as the guardian of peace. Appropriation of talent to employment is one of the deep results of political sagacity. And in his selection of men for office, Washington displayed a knowledge of character and of business, a contempt of favoritism and a devotion to the public welfare, which permitted the *General* to be rivaled only by the *President.*

Under such auspices, the fruit and the pledge of divine blessing, America rears her head and recovers her vigors. Agriculture laughs on the land: Commerce ploughs the wave: Peace rejoices at her home; and she grows into respect abroad. Ah! too happy to progress without interruption. The explosions of Europe bring new vexations to her, and new trials and new glories to her Washington. Vigilant and faithful, he hears the tempest roar from afar, warns her of its approach, and prepares for avertiug its dangers. Black are the heavens and angry the billows, and narrow and perilous the passage. But his composure, dignity, and firmness, are equal to the peril. Unseduced by fraud; unterrified by threat; unawed by clamor; he holds

on his steady way, and again he saves his country. With less decision on the part of Washington, a generous but mistaken ardor would have plunged her into the whirlpool, and left her till this hour the sport of the contending elements. Americans! bow to that magnanimous policy which protected your dearest interests at the hazard of incurring your displeasure. It was thus that Washington proved himself, not in the cant of the day, but in the procurement of substantial good, in stepping between them and perdition, the servant of the people.

The historian of this period will have to record a revolt raised by infatuation against the law of the land. He will have to record the necessity which compelled even WASHINGTON to suppress it by the sword. But he will have to record also his gentleness and his lenity. Deeds of severity were his sad tribute to justice: deeds of humanity the native suggestions of his heart.

Eight years of glorious administration created a claim on the indulgence of his country, which none could think of disputing, but which all lamented should be urged. The ends which rendered his services indispensable being mostly attained, he demands his restoration to private life. Resigning to an able successor the reins which he had guided with characteristic felicity,

he once more bids adieu to public honors. Let not his motives be mistaken or forgotten. It was for him to set as great examples in the relinquishment, as in the acceptance, of power. No mortified ambition; no haughty disgusts; no expectation of higher office; prompted his retreat. He knew that foreign nations considered his life as the bond, and his influence as the vital spirit, of our union. He knew that his own lustre threw a shade over others, not more injurious to them than to his country. He wished to dispel the enchantment of his own name. He wished to relieve the apprehensions of America by making her sensible of her riches in other patriots; to be a spectator of her prosperity under their management; and to convince herself, and to convince the world, that she depended less on him than either her enemies or her friends believed; and therefore he withdrew.

Having lavished all her honors, his country had nothing more to bestow upon him except her blessing. But he had more to bestow upon his country. His views and his advice, the condensed wisdom of all his reflection, observation, and experience, he delivers to his compatriots in a manual worthy of them to study and of him to compose. And now, when they could hope to enjoy only the satisfaction of still possessing him, the pleasure of recounting his acts, and the

benefit of praticing his lessons, they accompany his retirement with their aspirations that his evening may be as serene as his morning had been fair, and his noon resplendent.

That he should ever again endure the solicitudes of office was rather to be deprecated than desired; because it must be a crisis singularly portentous which could justify another invasion of his repose. From such a necessity we fondly promised ourselves exemption. Flattering, fallacious security! The sudden whirlwind springs out of a calm. The revolutions of a day proclaim that an empire was. However remote the position of America; however peaceful her character; however cautious and equitable her policy; she was not to go unmolested by the gigantic fiend of Gallic domination. That she was free and happy was crime and provocation enough. He fastened on her his murderous eye; he was preparing for her that deadly embrace in which nations supine and credulous had already perished. Reduced to the alternative of swelling the catalogue of his victims, or arguing her cause with the bayonet and the ball, she bursts the ill-fated bonds which had linked her to his destinies, and assumes the tone and attitude of defiance. The gauntlet is cast. To press on is perilous; to retreat destruction. She looks wistfully round, and calls for WASHINGTON. The

well-known voice, that voice which he had ever accounted a law, pierces the retreats of Vernon, and thrills his bosom. Domestic enjoyments lose their charm; repose becomes to him inglorious; every sacrifice is cheap, and every exertion easy, when his beloved country requires his aid. With all the alacrity of youth he flies to her succor. The helmet of war presses his silver locks. His sword, which dishonor had never tarnished nor corruption poisoned, he once more unsheathes, and prepares to receive on its point the insolence of that foe whose intrigue he had foiled by his wisdom.

It must ever be difficult to compare the merits of Washington's characters, because he always appeared greatest in that which he last sustained. Yet if there is a preference, it must be assigned to the Lieutenant General of the armies of America. Not because the duties of that station were more arduous than those which he had often performed, but because it more fully displayed his magnanimity. While others become great by elevation, Washington becomes greater by condescension. Matchless patriot! to stoop, on public motives, to an inferior appointment, after possessing and dignifying the highest offices! Thrice favored country, which boasts of such a citizen! We gaze with astonishment; we exult that we are Americans.

We augur every thing great, and good, and happy. But whence this sudden horror? What means that cry of agony? Oh! 'tis the shriek of America! The fairy vision is fled: WASHINGTON is—no more!

How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

Daughters of America, who erst prepared the festal bower and the laurel wreath, plant now the cypress grove, and water it with tears.

How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

The death of WASHINGTON, Americans, has revealed the extent of our loss. It has given us the final proof that we never mistook him. Take his affecting testament, and read the secrets of his soul. Read all the power of domestic virtue. Read his strong love of letters and of liberty. Read his fidelity to republican principle, and his jealousy of national character. Read his devotedness to you in his military bequests to near relations. "These swords," they are the words of Washington, "these swords are accompanied with an injunction not to unsheathe them for the purpose of shedding blood, except it be for self-defense, or in defense of their country and its rights; and in the latter case, to keep them unsheathed, and prefer falling

with them in their hands to the relinquishment thereof."

In his acts, Americans, you have seen the man. In the complicated excellence of character he stands alone. Let no future Plutarch attempt the iniquity of parallel. Let no soldier of fortune; let no usurping conqueror; let not Alexander or Cæsar; let not Cromwell or Bonaparte; let none among the dead or the living; appear in the same picture with WASHINGTON; or let them appear as the shade to his light.

On this subject, my countrymen, it is for others to speculate, but it is for us to feel. Yet in proportion to the severity of the stroke ought to be our thankfulness that it was not inflicted sooner. Through a long series of years has God preserved our Washington a public blessing; and now that he has removed him forever, shall we presume to say, *What doest thou?* Never did the tomb preach more powerfully the dependence of all things on the will of the Most High. The greatest of mortals crumble into dust the moment he commands, *Return, ye children of men.* Washington was but the instrument of a benignant God. He sickens, he dies, that we may learn not to *trust in men*, nor to *make flesh our arm.* But though Washing-

ton is dead, Jehovah lives. God of our fathers! be our God, and the God of our children! Thou art our refuge and our hope; the pillar of our strength; the wall of our defense, and our unfading glory!

Americans! This God, who raised up Washington and gave you liberty, exacts from you the duty of cherishing it with a zeal according to knowledge. Never sully, by apathy or by outrage, your fair inheritance. Risk not, for one moment, on visionary theories, the solid blessings of your lot. To you, particularly, O youth of America! applies the solemn charge. In all the perils of your country remember Washington. The freedom of reason and of right has been handed down to you on the point of the hero's sword. Guard with veneration the sacred deposit. The curse of ages will rest upon you, O youth of America! if ever you surrender to foreign ambition, or domestic lawlessness, the precious liberties for which Washington fought, and your fathers bled.

I cannot part with you, fellow-citizens, without urging the long remembrance of our present assembly. This day we wipe away the reproach of republics, that they know not how to be grateful. In your treatment of living patriots, recall your love and your regret of

WASHINGTON. Let not future inconsistency charge this day with hypocrisy. Happy America, if she gives an instance of universal principle in her sorrows for the man, "first in war, first in peace, and first in the affections of his country!"

AN ORATION,

COMMEMORATIVE OF THE LATE

MAJ. GEN. ALEXANDER HAMILTON;

PRONOUNCED BEFORE THE

NEW YORK STATE SOCIETY OF THE CINCINNATI,

ON TUESDAY, THE 31ST JULY, 1804.

FUNERAL ORATION.

Sad, my fellow-citizens, are the recollections and forebodings which the present solemnities force upon the mind. Five years have not elapsed since your tears flowed for the Father of your country, and you are again assembled to shed them over her eldest son. No, it is not an illusion—would to God it were: Your eyes behold it: the urn which bore the ashes of Washington, is followed by the urn which bears the ashes of Hamilton. Cruel privation!—but I forbear. God's *way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known.* It is not for mortals to repine, much less to arraign. Our Hamilton is removed; and we have nothing left but to recall his image; to gather up his maxims, and to profit by our affliction. Accompany me, therefore, to a short

retrospect. I feel that I shall not justify an appointment too imposing to be declined. Your own hearts must supply my deficiency. I aspire to nothing more than a faint outline of the man whom you loved.

Presages of his future eminence were evolved by the first buddings of intellect in ALEXANDER HAMILTON. The course of the boy, like that of the man, was ardent, rapid, and beyond the reach of his contemporaries. History will hereafter relate that he was numbered among statesmen at an age when in others the rudiments of character are scarcely visible. In the contest with Great Britain, which called forth every talent and every passion, his juvenile pen asserted the claims of the colonies against writers from whom it would derogate to say that they were merely respectable. An unknown antagonist, whose thrust was neither to be repelled nor parried, excited inquiry; and when he began to be discovered, the effect was apparently so disproportioned to the cause, that his papers were ascribed to a statesman who then held a happy sway in the councils of his country, who has since rendered her the most essential services; and who still lives to adorn her name.* But the truth could not long be concealed. The powers of HAMILTON created their own evidence;

* John Jay, Esq.

and America saw, with astonishment, a lad of seventeen in the rank of her advocates, at a time when her advocates were patriots and sages. A distinction thus nobly acquired, and ably maintained, was a pledge to the commonwealth, which he lost no time in redeeming. His first step from the college, was into a military post; his second into the family and confidence of WASHINGTON. Here he had opportunities of studying a man, from whom no other man was too great to learn; of analyzing those rare qualities which met in his character; and of nourishing his own magnanimity by free communication with the magnanimity of his chief. His sound understanding, his comprehensive views, his promptitude, application, and patience, would have endeared him to a man less discriminating than WASHINGTON; but to him they were inestimable, and they speedily sunk the patron in the friend. The pair became inseparable. While others were indulging in wonted gaiety, they were closeted on matters of state; and the pensive brow of the youth was often the first intimation of serious design in the veteran.

It was impossible for such a pupil, in such a school, not to be conspicuous. The materials furnished by WASHINGTON's experience; by his consummate prudence; by the disclosure of his plans, and of the springs of national operations,

fostered the genius of HAMILTON, and fitted him for command. His agency in the correspondence of the commander in chief, and in directing the movements of the army, is for the research of his biographer. I pass over his personal valor, not only because it never was disputed; but because the possession of it, as being one of the most common of military attributes, is not so much the praise of a soldier, as the want of it is his infamy. But be it remembered with pride, that he was as humane as he was brave. He knew how to storm an enemy's intrenchments, but not how to sacrifice a suppliant. His gentleness assuaged martial rigor; nor was his sword polluted by a drop of blood wantonly or carelessly shed.

The capture of Lord Cornwallis having secured our independence, there was nothing to protract the war, but a few measures proper to save appearances, and to prepare for acceding, with decorum, to preliminaries of peace. It became, of course, a subject of solicitude to reflecting young men who had no profession but that of arms, how they should procure an honorable subsistence, and be useful to the community, when that profession should be superseded. Among these was HAMILTON. Encumbered with a family, destitute of funds, and having no inducement to continue in the army, he sheathed his

sword, and, at the age of twenty-five, applied to the study of the law.

To most men, sudden alterations of habit are seldom advantageous, often ruinous. HAMILTON they did but introduce to an acquaintance with his own inexhaustible mind. Hardly had he exchanged the camp for the bar, when he burst forth in the lustre of a civilian; and gave a promise which he more than fulfilled, of excelling in jurisprudence, as he had excelled in war.

But it was not for HAMILTON to detach his private pursuits from the public welfare. Scenes were about to open in which it would need his resource and his energy. The war of independence had terminated gloriously; the states had risen to their natural position; their career of prosperity had commenced, but their struggles were not over. Resentments, jealousies, and the farce of an *advising* government, kept them in jeopardy. That foresight, moderation, and firmness; that comprehension of the public interest, and of the means of promoting it; that zeal, and vigilance, and integrity, which were indispensable to our safety, the inspiration of God had assembled in the soul of HAMILTON. To many who now hear me it is familiar, that after the conclusion of peace, some of our citizens, impelled by their temper, their cupidity, or both, were meditating violence against the property

and persons of all who had remained in this city during the war. The generous HAMILTON revolted. No consideration of private friendship or hazard, could prevail with him to connive at faithlessness and revenge. He remonstrated against a scheme of which the policy was as false, as the spirit was malignant. His voice was authority, for it was honor and truth. The public listened, and the infatuation was at an end.*

To these agitations succeeded a more perplexing difficulty. The confederation, framed under the pressure of common danger, proved unequal to its object whenever that pressure was removed. Thirteen republics, with an internal organization which commanded their whole moral and physical force; connected by a fictitious tie under a head without a single effective power, afforded a spectacle of which it is hard to say, whether it was more ludicrous or melancholy. Such a condition of things could not last. The very first occurrence which should put the will of congress at issue with the will of one of the larger states, would have dissolved the phantom; and shown America to

* On this subject it would be less a compliment to mention, than an injury to omit, the name of his excellency George Clinton, Esq., then governor of the state; whose honorable, independent, and successful exertions to restrain our citizens, cannot be remembered but with respect and veneration.

be, what the discerning at home and abroad already perceived her to be in theory, a nation; in fact, a number of rival and hostile sovereignties. The evils to be apprehended from such a conflict were alarming; and they were approaching with no less certainty, than it is certain that the principles of human action are not to be altered, nor suspended by compact. The failure of a request from Congress for permission to levy a small duty upon imports, was hastening a crisis which the mighty mind of HAMILTON proposed to avert. With the express intention of making an effort to retrieve our affairs by establishing an efficient general government, did he consent to be nominated as a candidate for the legislature of this state. The design was magnanimous. It embraced the only expedient to prevent our ruin; but it was confided to a few chosen friends. For such was the national inexperience, and the popular jealousy, that the least suspicion of his purpose would have blasted his reputation as an enemy to freedom. Oh, HAMILTON! equally pure and disinterested were all thy plans, though often misunderstood and calumniated! And now, when there is no more room for suspicion, let his country in judging of them, not forget, that the very measure which, at first, she would bitterly have execrated, has been her salvation. Yes, it is indubitable, that the original germ out

of which has grown up her unexampled prosperity, was in the bosom of HAMILTON. From the abortive attempt of Congress already mentioned, proceeded a commercial convention; and to the report of that body, which, as he foresaw, was unable to extricate the nation, do we owe the federal convention. Here, Americans, was the constellation of your heroes and your statesmen. Here your WASHINGTON presided, and your HAMILTON shone. What weight the first of these names added to every thing which received its sanction, and what a conciliating charm it diffused through the states, you need not to be informed. But you ought not to be ignorant, that the benefit arising from the signature of WASHINGTON substantiates a claim on your gratitude to HAMILTON; as it was the advice of the latter previously consulted, which persuaded the former to accept a seat in the convention. A prudent secrecy covers the transactions of that august assembly. But could the vail be drawn aside, you would hear the youth of thirty, fascinating, with his eloquence, the collective wisdom of the states; and instructing the hoary patriot in the recondite science of government. You would observe all the emotions of his manly heart, occupying, in turn, his expressive features; and see, through the window in his breast,

every anxiety, every impulse, every thought, directed to your happiness.

The result is in your hands: It is in your national existence. Not such indeed, as HAMILTON wished, but such as he could obtain, and as the states would ratify, is the federal constitution. His ideas of a government which should elevate the character, preserve the unity, and perpetuate the liberties of America, went beyond the provisions of that instrument. Accustomed to view men as they are; and to judge of what they will be, from what they ever have been, he distrusted any political order which admits the baneful charity of supposing them to be what they ought to be. He knew how averse they are from even wholesome restraint; how obsequious to flattery; how easily deceived by misrepresentation; how partial, how vehement, how capricious. He knew that vanity, the love of distinction, is inseparable from man; that if it be not turned into a channel useful to the government, it will force a channel for itself; and if cut off from other egress, will issue in the most corrupt of all aristocracies—the aristocracy of money. He knew, that an extensive territory, a progressive population, an expanding commerce, diversified climate, and soil, and manners, and interest, must generate faction; must interfere with foreign views, and present emergencies requir-

ing, in the general organization, much tone and promptitude. A strong government, therefore; that is, a government stable and vigorous; adequate to all the forms of national exigency; and furnished with the principles of self-preservation, was undoubtedly his preference; and he preferred it because he conscientiously believed it to be necessary. A system which he would have entirely approved, would probably keep in their places those little men who aspire to be great; would withdraw much fuel from the passions of the multitude; would diminish the materials which the worthless employ for their own aggrandizement; would crown peace at home with respectability abroad; but would never infringe the liberty of an honest man. From his profound acquaintance with mankind, and his devotion to all that good society holds dear, sprang his apprehensions for the existing constitution. Convinced that the natural tendency of things is to an encroachment by the states on the union; that their encroachments will be formidable as they augment their wealth and population; and, consequently, that the vigor of the general government will be impaired in a very near proportion with the increase of its difficulties; he anticipated the day when it should perish in the conflict of local interest and of

local pride. The divine mercy grant that his prediction may not be verified!

But whatever fears he entertained for the ultimate safety of the federal constitution; it is, in every respect, so preferable to the old confederation, and its rejection would have been so extremely hazardous, that he exerted all his talents and influence in its support. In the papers signed PUBLIUS, which compress the experience of ages, and pour original light on the science of government, his genius has left a manual for the future statesman. And they will be read with deeper interest when it is considered that, eloquent and powerful as they are, they were written under the pressure of business, amidst the conversation of friends, and the interrogatories of clients. Alas! the spirit which dictated them is fled; the hand which penned them moulders in death!

His voice co-operated with his pen: In the convention of this state, which met to deliberate on the federal constitution, he was always heard with awe, perhaps with conviction; though not always with success. But when the crisis arrived—when a vote was to determine whether New York should retain or relinquish her place in the union; and preceding occurrences made it probable that she would choose the worst part of the alternative, HAMILTON arose in redoubled

strength. He argued, he remonstrated, he entreated, he warned, he painted, till apathy itself was moved, and the most relentless of human things, a preconcerted majority, was staggered and broken. Truth was again victorious, and New York enrolled herself under the federal standard.

The government happily erected, was now to be organized. Every eye fixed upon WASHINGTON for the first magistrate. He knew it, and hesitated. The competition between his love of retirement, his former resolutions, and the new state of affairs, held him in painful suspense. But the judgment of HAMILTON preponderated, and he yielded to the public wish.

That faithful adviser, whom he had consulted upon every question of moment, and who never gave him an unsound advice, could not be omitted in the original administration. The department best suited to him, because the most arduous, was the treasury. He had already passed from the warrior into the jurist, and he was now to appear in the new and very different character of a financier. A losing commerce, a famished agriculture, an empty purse, and prostrate credit, would have overwhelmed the ordinary man; but they only brought into action the resources of HAMILTON. His plans for redeeming the reputation of the country, by satisfying her creditors;

and for combining with the government such a moneyed interest as might facilitate its operations, were strenuously opposed. But as it is easier to cavil than to refute, to complain than to amend, the opposition failed. The effect was electrical. Commerce revived; the ploughshare glittered; property recovered its value; credit was established; revenue created; the treasury filled.

This great fiscal revolution enriched numbers who held a large amount of the public paper, purchased at a season when the unpromising state of the public faith had set it afloat in the market at a most ignoble price. None could have fairer opportunities of acquiring a princely fortune, than the financier himself. So inviting was the occasion, and the disposition to profit by it so little at variance with the common estimate of honorable gain, that few supposed it possible to resist the temptation. The fact being presumed, every petty politician erected himself into a critic; while the gazettes, the streets, the polls of election, resounded with the millions amassed by the secretary. It is natural that the idolators of gold should treat the contempt of it as a chimera: but gold was not the idol of Hamilton. He had formerly relinquished his own claims to compensation for military services, that obloquy might not breathe an

impeachment of his motives in espousing the claims of his brother officers.* And from this proud eminence which he then ascended, he was not now to be seduced by the attractions of lucre. Exquistely delicate toward official character, he touched none of the advantages which he put within the reach of others; he vested not a dollar in the public funds.

Although his particular province was the treasury, his genius pervaded the whole administration; and in those critical events which crowded each other, had a peculiar influence upon its measures. The French revolution, which our fondness mistook for the birth of virtuous freedom, stood before him, from the beginning, in that hideous form which it has since unmasked. Not to be duped by hollow pretenses, he was active in arresting the course of an inso-

* Being a member of congress, while the question of the commutation of the half-pay of the army for a sum in gross was in debate, delicacy, and a desire to be useful to the army, by removing the idea of his having an interest in the question, induced him to write to the Secretary of war, and relinquish his claim to half-pay; which, or the equivalent, he accordingly never received. Neither did he ever apply for the lands allowed by the United States to officers of his rank. It is true, that having served through the latter periods of the war on the general staff of the United States, and not in the line of this state, he could not claim the allowance as a matter of course. But having before the war resided in this state, and having entered the military career at the head of a company of artillery raised for the particular defense of this state, he had better pretensions to the allowance than others to whom it was actually made. Yet has it not been extended to him.

lent minister; and not to be biased by popular frenzy, he secured that dignified ground to which the United States were led by the proclamation of neutrality. Without his aid, great WASHINGTON himself might have been borne down by the torrent, and the nation implicated in war to gratify the resentment and ambition of France.

Internal embarrassment soon added fresh honors to HAMILTON as a statesman. The western insurrection, which had rejected the condescending proposals of government, was to be quelled by force. A more serious question had not occupied the cabinet, as nothing had hitherto occurred to try the strength of the national arm. It was now to be ascertained how far the turbulent might trifle with the law; and what reliance they might place upon armed opposition. Incalculable consequences hung upon the precedent. Feeble measures would have surrendered the peace, perhaps the life, of the union; but feeble measures were contemplated. That timidity which shrinks from decision; that economy which accounts every thing less precious than money; and that covert treason which favored the rebellion, would have ordered out a detachment that might have been met and defeated.

The penetration of HAMILTON was not to be eluded, nor his firmness to be shaken, by any argument in support of so dangerous an experi-

ment. "If you wish," said he, "to maintain the authority of the laws; to prevent the repetition of similar outrages; to spare your treasure and your blood; let the insurgents, let the continent see, that it is never to admit of a doubt whether the national will shall be obeyed or not. Teach them this lesson by employing a force which shall put resistance out of the question." This sage and humane policy was adopted by WASHINGTON; and the rebellion disappeared without effusion of blood.

After the restoration of order, Mr. HAMILTON remained but a short time in office. His numerous services gave him, perhaps, a right to retire when the state might be safely intrusted to other hands. But one reason of his retreat deserves particular notice, because it involves a mischievous and disreputable principle. A general error in popular systems is a frugality which computes nothing but pence. The affairs of a nation, however, cannot be ably conducted without able and independent men. But such men, in a country where the demand for active talent is greater than the supply, will always hold their fortunes in their own hand: nor are we to expect that they will submit to the toils and responsibility of public office, with a support utterly disproportioned both to their station and their means of providing for themselves. No

people is in jeopardy from the liberality of their civil list: but when this is niggardly, able men withdraw in succession, and the state falls, at length, into the hands of the weak or the wicked, whose want of capacity, or of integrity, squanders on one occasion, the public revenue, and on another, overloads it with the expenses of war. The last of these consequences God forbid we should experience; the first was exemplified in the history of HAMILTON. He entered into public service with property of his own, the well-earned reward of professional talent; he continued in it, till his little funds were dissipated; and left it, to get bread for a suffering family. It was surely enough that he had impoverished himself while he was enriching the commonwealth; but it was beyond measure insulting to charge him, under such circumstances, with invading the public purse. Nobody believed the charge; and least of all, the slanderers who brought it. But WASHINGTON was vilified, and how should HAMILTON escape! The virtuous saw, with regret, that he stooped to repel it; and with anguish, that in regard to a private aberration, his defense contained a disclosure of which they admired the ingenuousness, but deplored the occasion, while they wept over a spot in a blaze of excellence.

Large and lucrative practice at the bar promised to replace his pecuniary sacrifices in official life. But a new distress of his country drew him again from his professional engagements. Our remonstrances against the injuries committed by France, had proved unavailing; and her rude and humiliating requisitions had fired the national spirit. Little was to be expected from the generosity, and less from the rectitude, of a government framed upon the maxims of the new philosophy. Tribute or the sword, was the only choice of the states, and it would have been a libel on the war of independence to have hesitated a moment. A provisional army, with WASHINGTON at their head, was summoned into the field; but the condition on which he suspended the acceptance of his own commission was that HAMILTON should be his associate. The end of this stipulation could not be misunderstood. He not only designed to have his age relieved from some heavy cares by his younger friend; but, in the event of his own decease, to leave the sword of America in the hands of a man whom nothing could overreach, nothing intimidate, nothing corrupt.

Subsequent adjustment of our dispute with the French Republic, was accompanied with the discharge of the provisional army, and with HAMILTON'S second return to his profession.

Here, unwearied in diligence, and unrivaled in fame, he filled up the residue (ah, too transient!) of his invaluable days. But, as you have truly been told, though he had withdrawn from public life, he was not an hour absent from the public service. It did not belong to a man absorbed in his country's welfare, to look with indifference on the course of her affairs. Office he wanted none. None in the gift of the nation would have moved him from his purpose. He reserved himself for crises which he feared are approaching; such crises, especially, as may affect the integrity of the union. How he was alarmed by every thing which pointed at its dissolution; how indignant were his feelings and language on that ungracious topic; how stern and steady his hostility to every influence which only leaned toward the project, they will attest with whom he was in habits of communication. In every shape, it encountered his reprobation as unworthy of a statesman, as fatal to America, and desirable to the desperate alone. One of his primary objects was to consolidate the efforts of good men in retarding a calamity which, after all, they may be unable to avert; but which no partial nor temporary policy should induce them to accelerate. To these sentiments must be traced his hatred to continental factions; his anxiety for the federal constitution, although, in

his judgment, too slight for the pressure which it has to sustain; his horror of every attempt to sap its foundation, or loosen its fabric; his zeal to consecrate it in the affections of his fellow-citizens, that if it fall at last, they may be pure from the guilt of its overthrow—an overthrow, which may be accomplished in an hour, but of which the woes may be entailed upon ages to come.

With such dignified policy he joined the most intense application to his professional duties. But the description of these is not my province. How he resolved the most intricate cases; how he pursued general principles through their various modifications; how he opened the fountains of justice; how he revered the rights of property; how he signalized himself in protecting the defenseless; how judges, and jurors, and counsel, and audience, hung on his accents; let them declare who have intrusted their fortunes to his hand: Let them declare who have wondered that any man should be thought great while HAMILTON appeared at the American bar.

But enumerations were endless. He was born to be great. Whoever was second, HAMILTON must be first. To his stupendous and versatile mind no investigation was difficult—no subject presented which he did not illuminate. Superiority, in some particular, belongs to thousands.

Pre-eminence, in whatever he chose to undertake, was the prerogative of HAMILTON. No fixed criterion could be applied to his talents. Often has their display been supposed to have reached the limit of human effort; and the judgment stood firm till set aside by himself. When a cause of new magnitude required new exertion, he rose, he towered, he soared; surpassing himself, as he surpassed others. Then was nature tributary to his eloquence! Then was felt his despotism over the heart! Touching, at his pleasure, every string of pity or terror, of indignation or grief; he melted, he soothed, he roused, he agitated; alternately gentle as the dews, and awful as the thunder. Yet, great as he was in the eyes of the world, he was greater in the eyes of those with whom he was most conversant. The greatness of most men, like objects seen through a mist, diminishes with the distance: but HAMILTON, like a tower seen afar off under a clear sky, rose in grandeur and sublimity with every step of approach. Familiarity with him was the parent of veneration. Over these matchless talents, probity threw her brightest lustre. Frankness, suavity, tenderness, benevolence, breathed through their exercise. And to his family!—but he is gone.—That noble heart beats no more: that eye of fire is dimmed; and sealed are those oracular lips. Americans, the

serenest beam of your glory is extinguished in the tomb!

Fathers, friends, countrymen! the death of HAMILTON is no common affliction. The loss of distinguished men is, at all times, a calamity; but the loss of such a man, at such a time, and in the very meridian of his usefulness, is singularly portentous. When WASHINGTON was taken, HAMILTON was left—but HAMILTON is taken, and we have no WASHINGTON. We have not such another man to die! WASHINGTON and HAMILTON in five years!—Bereaved America! Thou art languishing beneath the divine displeasure. Let this truth awfully impress my hearers, that when the Almighty God is about to *shake terribly the earth;* when he has bidden scourge to follow scourge, and vengeance to press on vengeance, one of his means is to deprive a nation of their ablest men. Thus bereft of counsel, their affairs run into confusion, and bring forth misery. I invent nothing; I only repeat the admonition of holy writ: *For behold, the Lord, the Lord of hosts, doth take away the mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient, the captain of fifty, and the honorable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator.* The disastrous consequences are, impotent governors, and ruthless anarchy. For

the prophet continues, *I will give children to be their princes, and babes shall rule over them. And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbor; the child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honorable.*

Fathers, friends, countrymen! the grave of HAMILTON speaks. It charges me to remind you that he fell a victim, not to disease or accident; not to the fortune of glorious warfare; but, how shall I utter it? to a custom which has no origin but superstition, no aliment but depravity, no reason but in madness. Alas! that he should thus expose his precious life. This was his error. A thousand bursting hearts reiterate, this *was* his error. Shall I apologize? I am forbidden by his living protestations, by his dying regrets, by his wasted blood. Shall a solitary act into which he was betrayed and dragged, have the authority of a precedent? The plea is precluded by the long decisions of his understanding, by the principles of his conscience, and by the reluctance of his heart. Ah! when will our morals be purified, and an imaginary honor cease to cover the most pestilent of human passions? My appeal is to military men. Your honor is sacred. Listen. Is it honorable to enjoy the esteem of the wise and good? The wise and good turn with disgust from the man who lawlessly aims

at his neighbor's life. Is it honorable to serve your country? That man cruelly injures her, who, from private pique, calls his fellow-citizen into the dubious field. Is fidelity honorable? That man forswears his faith, who turns against the bowels of his countrymen, weapons put into his hand for their defense. Are generosity, humanity, sympathy, honorable? That man is superlatively base, who mingles the tears of the widow and orphan, with the blood of a husband and father. Do refinement, and courtesy, and benignity, entwine with the laurels of the brave? The blot is yet to be wiped from the soldier's name, that he cannot treat his brother with the decorum of a gentleman, unless the pistol or the dagger be every moment at his heart. Let the votaries of honor now look at their deeds. Let them compare their doctrine with this horrible comment. Ah! what avails it to a distracted nation that HAMILTON was murdered for a punctilio of honor? My flesh shivers! Is this, indeed, our state of society? Are transcendent worth and talent to be a capital indictment before the tribunal of ambition? Is the angel of death to record, for sanguinary retribution, every word which the collision of political opinion may extort from a political man? Are integrity and candor to be at the mercy of the assassin? And systematic crime to trample under foot, or smite

into the grave, all that is yet venerable in our humbled land? My countrymen, the land is defiled with blood unrighteously shed. Its cry, disregarded on earth, has gone up to the throne of God; and this day does our punishment reveal our sin. It is time for us to awake. The voice of moral virtue, the voice of domestic alarm, the voice of the fatherless and widow, the voice of a nation's wrong, the voice of HAMILTON's blood, the voice of impending judgment, calls for a remedy. At this hour, Heaven's high reproof is sounding from Maine to Georgia, and from the shores of the Atlantic to the banks of the Missisippi. If we refuse obedience, every drop of blood spilled in single combat, will lie at our door, and will be recompensed when our cup is full. We have, then, our choice, either to coerce iniquity, or prepare for desolation; and in the mean time, to make our nation, though infant in years, yet mature in vice, the scorn and the abhorrence of civilized man!

Fathers, friends, countrymen! the dying breath of HAMILTON recommended to you the Christian's hope. His single testimony outweighs all the cavils of the sciolist, and all the jeers of the profane. Who will venture to pronounce a fable, that doctrine of *life and immortality*, which his profound and irradiating mind embraced as the truth of God? When you are to die, you will

find no source of peace but in the faith of Jesus. Cultivate for your present repose and your future consolation, what our departed friend declared to be the support of his expiring moments: "A tender reliance on the mercies of the Almighty, through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ."

HAMILTON! we will cherish thy memory, we will embalm thy fame! Fare thee well, thou unparalleled man, farewell—forever!

APPENDIX.

To the Editor of the Commercial Advertiser.

Sir,

Having read, in your paper of the 16th, a very imperfect account of my conversation with General Hamilton, the day previous to his decease, I judge it my duty to lay the following narrative before the public.

On the morning of Wednesday, the 11th inst. shortly after the rumor of the General's injury had created an alarm in the city, a note from Dr. Post informed me that "he was extremely ill at Mr. Wm. Bayard's, and expressed a particular desire to see me as soon as possible." I went immediately. The exchange of melancholy salutation, on entering the General's apartment, was succeeded by a silence which he broke by saying, that he "had been anxious to see me, and have the sacrament administered to him; and that this was still his wish." I replied, that "it gave me unutterable pain to receive from him any request to which I could not accede: that, in the present instance, a compliance was incompatible with all my obligations; as it is a principle in our churches never to administer the Lord's supper privately to any person under any circumstances." He urged me no further. I then remarked to him, that, "the holy communion is an exhibition and pledge of the mercies which the Son of God has purchased; that the absence of the sign does not exclude from the mercies signified; which were accessible to him by faith in their gracious Author." "I am aware," said he, "of that. It is only as a sign that I wanted it." A short pause ensued. I resumed the discourse, by observing that "I had nothing to address to him in his affliction, but that same *gospel of the grace of God*, which it is my office to preach to the most obscure and illiterate: that in the sight of God all men are on a level, as *all have sinned, and come short of his glory;* and that they must apply to him for pardon and life, *as sinners*, whose only refuge is in his *grace reigning by righteousness through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" "I perceive it to be so," said he; "I am a sinner: I look to his mercy." I then adverted to "the infinite merit of the Redeemer, as the *propitiation for sin*, the sole ground of our acceptance with God; the sole channel of his favor to us; and cited the following passages of scripture: *There is no other name given under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus. He is able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.*" This last passage introduced the affair of the duel, on which I reminded the General, that he was not to be instructed as to its moral aspect, that *the*

precious blood of Christ was as effectual and as necessary to wash away the trangression which had involved him in suffering, as any other transgression; and that he must there, and there alone, seek peace for his conscience, and a hope that should "*not make him ashamed.*" He assented, with strong emotion, to these representations, and declared his abhorrence of the whole transaction. "It was always," added he, "against my principles. I used every expedient to avoid the interview; but I have found, for some time past, that my life *must* be exposed to that man. I went to the field determined not to take *his* life." He repeated his disavowal of all intention to hurt Mr. Burr; the anguish of his mind in recollecting what had passed; and his humble hope of forgiveness from his God. I recurred to the topic of the divine compassions; the freedom of pardon in the Redeemer Jesus to perishing sinners. "That grace, my dear General, which brings salvation, is rich, rich"—"Yes," interrupted he, "it is *rich* grace." "And on that grace," continued I, "a sinner has the highest encouragement to repose his confidence, because it is tendered to him upon the surest foundation; the scripture testifying that *we have redemption through the blood of Jesus, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace.*" Here the General, letting go my hand, which he had held from the moment I sat down at his bedside, clasped his hands together, and, looking up towards heaven, said, with emphasis, "I *have* a tender reliance on the mercy of the Almighty, through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ." He replaced his hand in mine, and appearing somewhat spent, closed his eyes. A little after, he fastened them on me, and I proceeded. "The *simple* truths of the gospel, my dear sir, which require no abstruse investigation, but faith in the veracity of God who cannot lie, are best suited to your present condition, and they are full of consolation." "I feel them to be so," replied he. I then repeated these texts of scripture: *It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and of sinners the chief. I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.* "This," said he, "is my support. Pray for me." "Shall I pray with you?" "Yes." I prayed with him, and heard him whisper as I went along; which I supposed to be his concurrence with the petitions. At the conclusion he said, "Amen. God grant it."

Being about to part with him, I told him, "I had one request to make." He asked "what it was?" I answered, "that whatever might be the issue of his affliction, he would give his testimony against the practice of dueling." "I will," said he, "I have done it. If *that*," evidently anticipating the event, "if *that* be the issue, you will find it in writing. If it please God that I recover, I shall do it in a manner which will effectually put me out of its reach in future." I mentioned, once more, the importance of renouncing every other dependence for the eternal world, but the mercy of God in Christ Jesus; with a particular reference to the catastrophe of the morning. The General was affected, and said, "Let us not pursue the

subject any further, it agitates me." He laid his hands upon his breast, with symptoms of uneasiness, which indicated an increased difficulty of speaking. I then took my leave. He pressed my hand affectionately, and desired to see me again at a proper interval. As I was retiring, he lifted up his hands in the attitude of prayer, and said feebly, "God be merciful to——." His voice sunk, so that I heard not the rest distinctly, but understood him to quote the words of the publican in the gospel, and to end the sentence with, "me a sinner."

I saw him, a second time, on the morning of Thursday; but from his appearance, and what I had heard, supposing that he could not speak without severe effort, I had no conversation with him. I prayed for a moment at his bedside, in company with his overwhelmed family and friends; and for the rest, was one of the mourning spectators of his composure and dignity in suffering. His mind remained in its former state: and he viewed with calmness his approaching dissolution. I left him between twelve and one, and at two, as the public know, he breathed his last.

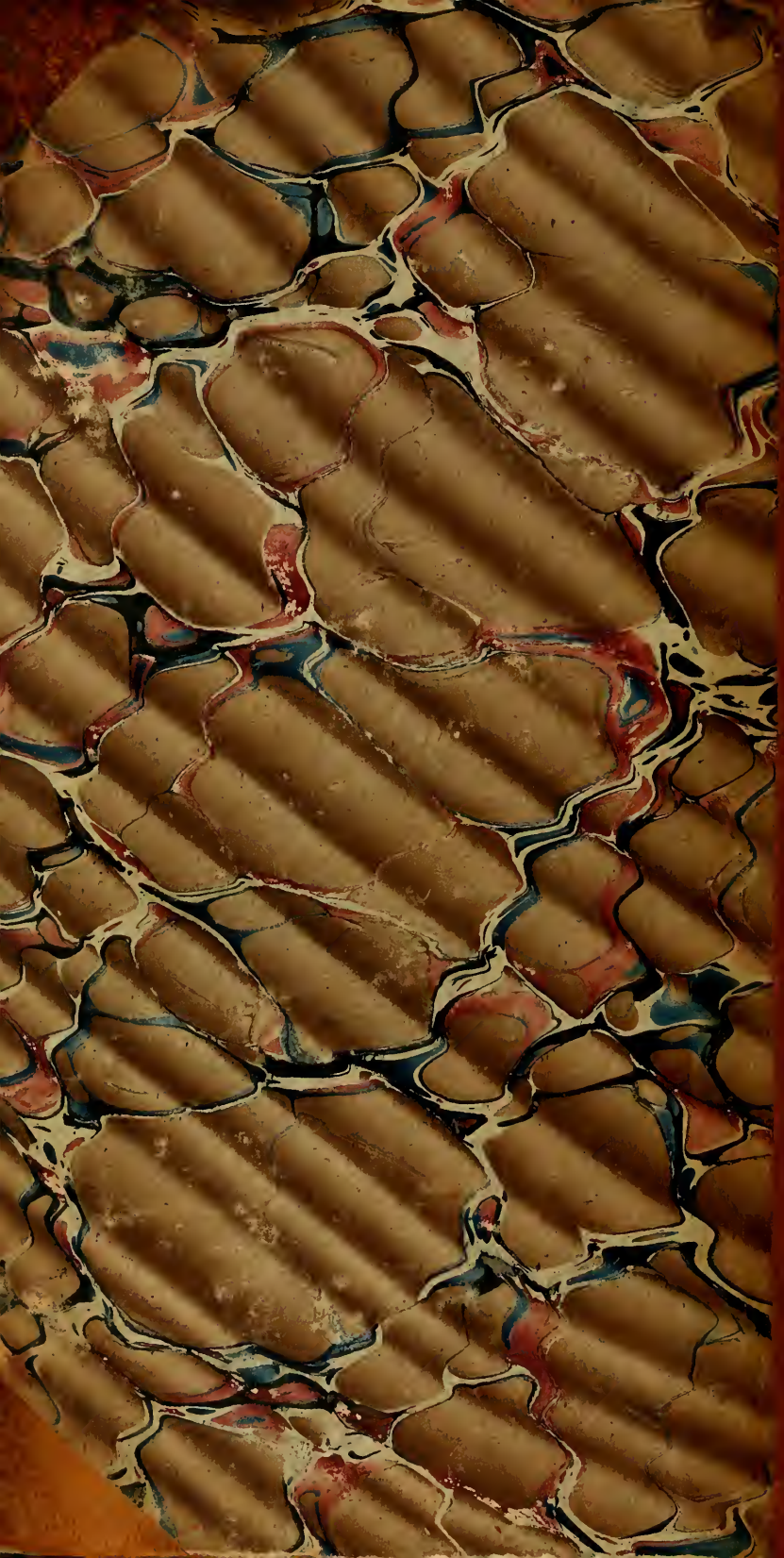
I am, sir,

With much respect,

Your obedient servant,

J. M. MASON.

New York, July 18th, 1804.

Note.—Several other articles were marked for publication, especially, Report to the board of trustees of Columbia College, in 1811, and a Letter to the Associate Reformed Church relative to the Theological Seminary of which he was originator and professor; but the unanticipated increase of the volumes compel their omission. Possibly in a memoir of Dr. Mason they may be presented to the public.

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